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A

DISSERTATION

ON THE

INFLUENCE OF OPINIONS ON LANGUAGE

AND OF

LANGUAGE ON OPINIONS,

WHICH GAINED THE

PRUSSIAN Royal Academy's Prize on that Subject.

CONTAINING

Many Curious Particulars in Philology, Natural Hiſtory, and the Scriptural Phraſeology.

TOGETHER WITH

AN ENQUIRY

INTO THE

Advantages and Practicability of an UNIVERSAL LEARNED LANGUAGE.

By Mr. MICHAELIS,

Court-Counſellor to His BRITANNIC Majeſty, and Director of the Royal Society at GOTTINGEN.

THE SECOND EDITION.

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TO THE

Heads of Colleges, Maſters of Academies, and other Seminaries of Learning:

GENTLEMEN,

THE propriety of dedicating this piece to you, as the beſt judges of its contents, and whoſe more immediate province it is to remove ſuch miſtakes and abuſes intimated therein as ſubſiſt among us, will excuſe the liberty of this dedication.

Wiſhing the moſt deſirable ſucceſs to your endeavours, as very nearly connected with the improvement of the human mind, and the public good, I remain with great reſpect,

GENTLEMEN,

Your moſt humble Servant,

THE TRANSLATOR.

THE PREFACE.

THE diſcourſe, of which the following ſheets are a tranſlation, was crowned by the Royal Academy of Berlin in 1759, and we flatter ourſelves that it will be the more acceptable to the public, as in the collection of the pieces which concurred for the prize, this, contrary to cuſtom, has appeared only in the German tongue. But what chiefly determined us is, on one hand, the importance of the ſubject, as concerning philoſophers of all times and all nations; and on the other, that maſterly ſtrength with which this ſubject is here handled byone of the moſt celebrated ſcholars in Germany; ſo that, with all the inferiority of a tranſlation, and from ſo great an original, we hope the good office herein intended to foreigners, will meet with a kind acceptance.

Judicious readers, in a work of this kind, ſeek fruits more than bloſſoms; accordingly the tranſlator endeavoured

only to be clear and exact. M. *Michaëlis* himſelf has condeſcended to reviſe a manuſcript of the tranſlation; and what gives this edition a great advantage over the German is, his having enriched it with very conſiderable ſupplements; among which the Literati will with pleaſure ſee an excellent diſſertation on the project of an univerſal language *.

* The authors of the *Bibliotheque des Beaux Arts*, in their account of Mr. *Michaëlis*'s Diſſertation, give the following ſhort hiſtory of this ſcheme, which has ſo exerciſed ſome philoſophic geniuſes.

We firſt find that *Deſcartes*, being conſulted by father *Merſenne* concerning the plan of an univerſal language, of which an anonymous Frenchman had given a ſketch, that great philoſopher indeed diſapproved its extent: it appeared to him in ſome reſpects chimerical; but, on the other hand, he allowed of the poſſibility of the thing itſelf; and, what is more, took the trouble of committing to paper what he thought of it, and the beſt method for executing it. *Cartes epiſt.* part i. epiſt. iii. That method *Kircher* afterwards endeavoured to carry into execution, in a book publiſhed by him at Rome, 1665, under the title of Ars *Polygraphica*, fol. See Morhof. *Polyhiſt.* lib. iv. cap. ii. tom. i. p. 729. but with that little ſucceſs, which *Deſcartes* had prognoſticated to the French author: *Exiſtimo poſſibilem eſſe hanc linguam, & reperiri poſſe ſcientiam eam ex qua illa pendet, cujus certe beneficio ruſticus quiſpiam de rerum veritate poſſet melius judicare quam jam philoſophus aliquis. Sed ne ſperes te unquam viſurum illam in uſum, & tam magnas in orbe mutationes ſupponit, eſſetque neceſſe totum orbem in terreſtrem paradiſum converti; quod ſane in fabulis tantum locum habeat.* Cartes, ibid.

Before

Before *Kircher*, and perhaps before any others we ſhall ſpeak of, *Beccherus* had undertaken to form a characteriſtic, and publiſhed his plan at Francfort in 1661, with this title, *Character pro Notitia Linguarum Univerſalis*, &c. and of which a new edition appears to have come out at the ſame place in 1668.

A native of Scotland, who kept a private grammar-ſchool at Oxford, had alſo written on the ſame ſubject in the year 1661: his name was *George Dalgarno*, or *Dalgarne:* he printed at London, in octavo, *Ars ſignorum, vulgo character univerſalis & lingua philoſophica, qua poterunt homines diverſiſſimorum idiomatum ſpatio duarum ſeptimanarum omnia animi ſui ſenſa, non minus intelligibiliter, ſive ſcribendo, ſive loquendo, mutuo communicare quam linguis propriis vernaculis*, &c. This work was, by the learned, judged to abound with erudition and pedantry.

Wood imagined that *Dalgerno* had communicated the manuſcript of it to Dr. *Wilkins*, afterwards biſhop of Cheſter, and that from it, the biſhop conceived his firſt idea of that arduous ſubject, on which in 1668 he publiſhed his famous book, entitled *An eſſay towards a real character, and a philoſophical language (a):* an extract of which book is to be found in the philoſophical tranſactions, No. 35. But as the learned authors of the new *Dictionaire hiſtorique & critique*, have very well obſerved on *Art. Wilkins.* It is evident from another book of the biſhops, which he publiſhed at London 1641, with the title of *Mercury, or the ſecret and ſpeedy meſſenger: ſhewing a ſafe and ſpeedy manner of communicating one's thoughts to a diſtant friend.* It is, we ſay, inconteſtable, that this learned perſon had meditated and drawn the plan of an univerſal character, at leaſt twenty years before *Delgarno*'s book ſaw the light. Dr. *Wilkins*'s book was received with great applauſe by ſome of the learned: Mr. *Hook*, among others, recommended it as the beſt plan that could be conceived.

(*a*) Wood, *Athen. Oxon.* vol. ii. col. 5, 7.

But

But we learn from M. *Fontenelle*'s fine eulogium on *Leibnitz*. *Hiſt. de l' Acad. des Sci.* 1716. pag. 148. edit. Amſt. that this great man was of another opinion. According to him, neither *Wilkins* nor *Delgarno* had hit on the true *real characters*, which he eſteemed the nobleſt inſtrument ever offered to the human mind, and which, ſaid he, muſt exceedingly facilitate both reaſoning, memory, and invention.

Leibnitz was unalterably perſuaded, that theſe characters muſt be like thoſe made uſe of in algebra. He ſaid, that he was buſied about *an alphabet of human thoughts*, as introductory to a philoſophic language; but death prevented his carrying that project into full execution. However, among the papers of that great man, were found a Latin treatiſe on that ſubject, and ſeveral pieces relating to it; which a learned Hanoverian gives us to hope will be publiſhed.

M. *Fontenelle* did not hold this ſcheme to be in any wiſe chimerical: "The "difficulty, ſaid he, is not to invent the moſt ſimple, the moſt eaſy, and the "moſt convenient characters; but to prevail with the ſeveral nations to make "uſe of them. Unfortunately, they agree in nothing but in not being ſenſible "of their common intereſts."

We muſt wait for what M. de *Premontval* will offer to the public on this head. The repetition of ſchemes, may perhaps bring to light a characteriſtic of eaſier execution, than any which have hitherto been propoſed: till then, M. *Michaëlis*'s arguments muſt hold good.

THE

THE INTRODUCTION.

I Take the liberty to divide the academy's problem; as to me ſeems moſt proper for unfolding and ſolving it.

I ſhall firſt ſpeak to the influence of the opinions of a people on the language; and the academy itſelf having judged this part of the queſtion to be the more eaſy, I ſhall only ſupport an inconteſtable propoſition, with ſome inſtances which ſerve for its farther illuſtration. This propoſition will likewiſe receive an additional light from obſervations; which, to avoid repetitions, I refer to the following ſections. In the ſecond part, I ſhall treat of the beneficial influences; and in the third, of the noxious influences of ſome languages on opinions and ſciences. Laſtly, I ſhall canvaſs the means of preventing one, and promoting the other.

ERRATA.

PAge 1. l. 4. for from origin *read* from its origin. p. 4. l. 27 for and *r.* him. p. 12. l. 1. dele to. p. 13. note *s.* for febrigue *r.* febrifuge. p. 15. l. 3. for habits *r.* habit. p. 19. l. 11. for loaded *r.* load. p. 21. l. 4. for ſo *r.* to. p. 22. l. 23. for impoſts *r.* imparts. p. 25. l. 31. dele ſo. p. 32. l. 13. dele for. p. 37. l. 17. for younger *r.* early. p. 41. l. 11. *r.* omniſcience too. p. 44. l. 7. for naturaliſts *r.* naturalis. p. 46. note *t.* l. 1. for having *r.* has. p. 47 l. 14. for leſſer *r.* leſs. p. 49. l. 11. for homon; my *r.* homonimy. p. 49. l. 14. for unexcepted *r.* unexpected. p. 51. l. 2. for certain, *r.* certainly. p. 51. l. 3. for it is *r.* is it. p. 52. l. 2. for comatentiona, *r.* collection. p. 56. note *k.* for celo, *r.* cielo. p. 68. l. 7. for bear *r.* bears. p. 73. l. 11. *r.* language. p. 75. l. 4. for influence *r.* influences.

A

DISSERTATION

ON THE

Influence of Opinions, &c.

SECTION I.

The influence of a people's opinions on the languages.

ALL objects preſent themſelves to our mind under a certain appearance, and by this appearance it is, that the names we give them and our deſcriptions of them are ever regulated. Nothing is more evident; ſuppoſe that every people had from origin been accuſtomed to a particular ſyſtem of botany; undoubtedly, the vegetables comprehended, among theſe different people, under the ſame generical appellation would not be the ſame. Though, there be not, between languages, a diſtinction ſo learned and ſo ſyſtematical; ſtill this fiction repreſents to us at large and more manifeſtly, what muſt happen in various particulars, among nations of a different way of thinking. There is no language, the origin of which is not, by many centuries, prior to that of the ſyſtems of botany which we are now acquainted with; likewiſe there are none in which may not be obſerved traces of the infancy of botany, of that rude and uncultivated knowledge of vegetables, which was the utmoſt attainment of the early ages: beſides thoſe of a viſible reſemblance,

they often comprehended under the ſame denomination thoſe which were employed for the like uſes, whatever might be their other differences. This method was likewiſe that of the moſt antient profeſſed botaniſts; they divided the claſſes of plants according to the reſpective benefits reaped from them. All this was no more than natural. The firſt motive for human attention fixing itſelf on the products of nature is their uſe, this is the character which, as it moſt concerns us, ſtrikes us previouſly and beyond all others.

All opinions are not received into the language; in that, neither the ſcholars authority nor his demonſtrations are regarded, however intimately he himſelf may be convinced of the truth of his doctrines. He may make a clamour about the juſtneſs of expreſſions, he may proteſt againſt vulgar errors; no body minds him. In ſhort, language is a democracy where uſe or cuſtom is decided by the majority; and Horace has pronounced that in languages cuſtom is the ſupreme law. For inſtance, ſhould a ſtickler for Copernicus and the true ſyſtem of the world, carry his zeal ſo far as to ſay *the city of Berlin ſets at ſuch and ſuch an hour*, inſtead of making uſe of the common expreſſion, *the ſun ſets at Berlin at ſuch an hour*, he ſpeaks the truth to be ſure; but his manner of ſpeaking it is pedantry. There is only one particular wherein the empire of language ſeems to differ from democracy; that often the commonalty take their rule of ſpeech from perſons of education, but is not the like ſeen in all democratical ſtates? Is it not a frequent caſe for a citizen conſcious of his ignorance gladly to defer to the opinion of one whom he conceives to have more knowledge and underſtanding? We need not therefore depart from a compariſon which ſo well repreſents, what it is intended to repreſent.

It is from the opinions of the people and the point of view, in which objects appear to them, that language receives its form. As literature and politeneſs gain ground in a nation, and according to the duration of their reign, they extend their influences in the language, the commonality in ſuch times, acquiring the knowledge of ſeveral expreſſions invented by the learned, as on the other hand, the latter not ſeldom adopt popular expreſſions. If it be conſidered that Greece, and eſpecially the city of Athens, were eminently poſſeſſed of this advantage, the great prerogatives of the Greek

language

language will no longer be wondered at. To this influence philoſophy and the ſeveral branches of literature principally contribute, eſpecially when from the duſt of the ſtudy, they paſs into the mouths both of the profane and ſacred orator, or thoſe pretty mouths, which the graces ſeem to animate, and whoſe every word meets with ecchos, delighting to repeat it. How many new words has not the Wolfian philoſophy introduced into our language, and how many words has it not ſtripped of their former import? But all this is nothing in compariſon of the conſequences, when poets of celebrity carry philoſophy to the ſummit of Parnaſſus, and embelliſh it with the charms of the muſes. Being eſteemed claſſical authors, every body is eager to read them, all their innovations are acquieſced to, their very faults, in company with ſo many beauties, are admired, and have their imitators. Now, only let a knot of perſons of wit make uſe of theſe new expreſſions as approving them, this alone brings them into repute; the very commonality affect them; they ſpread into univerſal vogue.

Not that I pretend to deny, but that one ſingle man, and who, far from a claſſical author, is, as I may ſay, only a private individual in the empire of language, may happen to ſtrike out an expreſſion which, with the ideas relative to it, ſhall be admitted into a language. For inſtance, a witty ſaying comes from one, it pleaſes the hearers, it is thought juſt and pretty, or fine, or ſtrong, many repeat it, it even meets with plagiaries who father it, thus it runs from mouth to mouth, till it grows into a kind of proverb. Thus it is that thouſands of men become contributors to that immenſe heap of truths and errors, of which the languages of nations are the repoſitories; but what every particular individual furniſhes is little or nothing: moſt hazarded expreſſions do not take; they are like bloſſoms of which the greater part drop from the trees and come to nothing: and even if a new term does take, it does not neceſſarily follow that it annihilates the former: the language, poſſibly, retains both. The right of creating as we have ſaid before, properly belongs only to claſſic authors, the fair ſex, and the people, who are indeed the ſupreme legiſlators.

Theſe are the propoſitions, which I am now to prove by inſtances.

The Greek name of the deity (*a*) is derived from a verb, which ſignifies, *to run, to move one's ſelf*, and many hold that this name was originally appropriated to the ſtars, as the deities which were worſhipped at the time of the formation of the language, and from thence their name came to be that of the deity.

Reaſon, in explaining the origin of the world, requires only one God, but ſuperſtition has ſtrangely multiplied the number, and this has affected the languages, particularly in the Latin, it has left very ſtrongly marked traces. The Latin word for God may be ſaid to be only plural; as for *Deus* in the ſingular number, its meaning does not correſpond with the word *Dieu* in French, or *Gott* in German. Whenever we hear theſe words, we immediately think on the only one God, and we make uſe of them as a proper name, without any article; whereas the *Deus* of the Latins denotes one God amongſt ſeveral, and ſhould be rendered in French *le Dieu, the God*, when this God is characterized by what goes before; and when not, *un des Dieux, one of the Gods*, or ſimply, *un Dieu, a God.* This admits of ſome exceptions, but I ſpeak of what is moſt uſual.

It may even be ſaid that the Greeks, no leſs than the Latins, are without a term to expreſs the idea which we form to ourſelves of God, I mean that of a ſupreme, independant, infinitely perfect Being, who has created the world. The Gods of the Romans, and the Demons of the Greeks, were only ſpirits ſuperior to man by their power and the excellence of their nature; they were nothing more than thoſe whom the church has ſtiled angels (*b*), their origin was quite as contingent, and their eſſence not leſs limitted; like them they were only miniſters and vicars of the true God. Of this God ſome philoſophers ſeemed to have had a remote view, and to have diſcerned and as it were through a veil; their moſt laboured definitions of him were extremely vague, inadequate and imperfect. What if they ſometimes give him the epithets of *ſovereign*, of *maſter of the Gods*, of *ſupreme God*, what if they call him *the thunder hurling God*, the *God who drives his thundering car along the clouds*, &c. Theſe deſcriptions

(*a*) Θεός.

(*b*) Of what the Engliſh call *Superior beings*.

were

were very far from being in their language ſo determinate, as the word denoting the Deity is in ours; they might indeed imply the notion of an intelligence of the firſt order, but finite and dependent. So that theſe languages had, in reality, the fault attributed to the Chineſe, and it is with leſs reaſon that the latter is ſaid to have no name for the Deity, as having no other than that of *Sky*. It is to the Chriſtian religion that we are beholden for a word which expreſſes, without any confuſion or ambiguity, the philoſophical idea of an infinite ſubſtance, Creator of the univerſe, and which diſtinguiſhes that ſubſtance from all intermediate ſpirits and angels, even in churches, where thoſe ſpirits have a worſhip of adoration paid to them.

The opinions of the Jews produced in the Greek language, which was ſpoken at Alexandria, and elſewhere among that nation, a quite contrary effect. The Greeks often gave to their Gods the names of *Demon* and *Demonion*, and theſe Gods the Jews took to be angels; but imagining the pagan deities to be ſenſitive and taking delight in the worſhip paid to them, they neceſſarily could take them only for rebel angels and ſuch as were fallen from their exalted origin. And that this was the real idea they entertained of ſuch ſpirits is well known, and farther that they had tranſmitted it not only to the Chriſtians but even the Arabs: in a word, the moſt manifeſt impreſs of it appears in their language: in the Greek of the Jews, I mean the Greek bible, the word *demonion* ſignifies a devil.

Every language, before it has gone through philoſophic hands, muſt of neceſſity be wanting in proper terms for denoting ſuch objects which do not come within the verge of the ſenſes, and eſpecially metaphiſical ideas. Thus Ludolph informs us, that the Ethiopians, having but one word for *nature* and *perſon*, could not diſtinguiſh thoſe two things in the controverſy concerning Chriſt's two natures.

On the other hand, when a language has followed philoſophy through its ſeveral revolutions, there will be ſome change in the meaning and import of its philoſophic terms. To moſt Germans the word *eſſence* or being (*c*), carries with it an idea agreeable to the Wolfian definition, an idea

(*c*) Weſen.

however,

however, very different from that which divines annexed to it, long before Leibnitz was ſo much as born, when they ſaid *that the eſſence of God is one.* I make no doubt that many ſtill give a modern ſenſe to that propoſition, as couched in our old language; and then they certainly will find nothing myſterious in the doctrine of the trinity. They will conceive the divine eſſence common to three perſons juſt as eaſily as they conceive the human eſſence common to millions of perſons. Formerly *eſſence* ſignified what at preſent is meant by *exiſtence* or *reality*, and Luther, without the leaſt ambiguity might render the 11th verſe of the 4th chapter of the Revelations, *Durch deinen Willen haben ſie das* Weſen, i. e. of thy will they hold their eſſence; but philoſophy having introduced ſome change into the language, this paſſage became obſcure, that a commentary was wanting to it, and one of our divines, Mr. Reinbeek, who had the courage to explain Luther in a rational manner, met with an adverſary, who denied the eternity of philoſophic eſſences, maintaining that thoſe very eſſences were produced by God and depended on his will.

The name by which the Germans call the leproſy is taken from the external figure as it appears to our eyes *(d)*. All over the Eaſt, where this diſtemper is almoſt incurable it was looked on as a puniſhment of God's own immediate inflicting. From holy ſcripture we know that this was the opinion of the Jews, and according to Herodotus, it was the belief of the Perſians, that the leproſy came no other way than as a puniſhment for having offended the ſun. From hence it is that the moſt uſual word for the leproſy, among the Hebrews, properly ſignifies *a ſtroke or laſh with a whip (e)*.

(d) The German name for the leproſy is auſſatz or excreſcence, which may ſignify the formation of ſcales on the ſkin.

(e) In Arabic, صريع (Tſari) *is a whip or ſcourge*, and صرع (Tſaraa) *to whip or ſcourge*. The paſſage of Herodotus is as follows. If any of the citizens have a leproſy or ſcrofulous diſeaſe he is not permitted to ſtay within the city, nor to converſe with other perſons; having as they believed drawn this puniſhment upon himſelf by committing ſome offence againſt the ſun, and if ſtrangers are infected with thoſe diſtempers they are immediately expelled the country, and, from motives of the ſame kind, white pigeons are not ſuffered to be kept.

The

The Greek word for a *ſoul* likewiſe ſignifies a butterfly *(f)*. The Greeks had obſerved the metamorphoſis which the catterpiller goes through, and ſeveral among them, who believed the immortality of ſouls, imagined that, at death, they only quitted their nympha to be inveſted with a divine nature. For this reaſon it was that they made the butterfly the hieroglyphic for repreſenting the ſoul, and at length conferred on that inſect the very name of the ſoul.

The Babylonians had a notion, that a grub *(g)* or kind of waſp went from the fruit of the male palm-tree into the date of the female palm-tree, and impregnated it *(h)*. Whatever may have been in this opinion, it had an influence on the Arabian language, between which and the Chaldean ſpoken at Babylon, there was only a dialectical difference. The Arabians denoted the bloſſom of the male palm-tree *(i)* by a name which, literally tranſlated, ſignifies the *palm-tree flies (k)*; and the Perſians, to deſcribe the fecundation of the female palm-tree by the male palm-tree, make uſe of the expreſſion *to apply the flies (l)*.

Here is another very remarkable paſſage, but the placing it in its full light indiſpenſibly leads me into a grammatical ſubtilty. The Orientals, by whom I mean thoſe ſeveral people whoſe languages were derived from one common ſource, as the Arabs, the Syrians, the Chaldeans, and the Hebrews: the Orientals, I ſay, ſeem, from time immemorial, to have been acquainted with the ſexes of plants, which, in our northern coun-

(f) Ψυχή

(g) Ψήν. Vermiculus in caprificis naſcens.

(h) The palm-tree grows naturally all over the plain of Babylon, and the greater part bear fruit, of which they make bread, wine, and honey. This tree is cultivated as the fig-tree, tying the fruit of that which the Grecians call the male palm about theſe trees which bear dates, to the end that a gnat may enter and ripen the fruit; for the fruit of the male palm, like that of the wild fig-tree, produces a gnat. Herodotus, l. 1.

(i) Spatha maſculina.

(k) Anbaar Elnachi. v. Kæmpferi Amœnitates exot 8. p. 696.

(l) Ambaar dadan. ib. p. 708. it muſt be noticed that Kæmpfer, being unacquainted with that opinion, tranſlates this otherwiſe; but though his meaning of the word *Ambder* be uſed in the Perſian language, it is not in the Arabic.

tries, is a diſcovery of no later date than the preſent age; and this is not to be wondered at, they had every where before them the palm-tree, in which the two ſexes are manifeſt beyond diſpute: and it was juſt as natural to conclude from that tree to other vegetables, as to conclude from animals in whom the difference of ſex is viſible, to thoſe in whom it is, as it were latent. The more the male palm-tree reſembles the female palm-tree before the fruit ripens, the ſtronger muſt the preſumption have been of a difference of ſexes in thoſe vegetables where the organs of generation are not obvious to the ſight; but the mind of man which delights in analogies, and is for caſting all nature in the ſame mould, refines on every thing, and ſpoils truths by overſtraining them. The Orientals thought every thing had its duplicate. *God*, ſays Mahomet, *has created nothing which is not male and female: this holds good in all the productions of the earth, it holds good of ſouls, and even of things where you little apprehend any ſuch thing (m)*. With ſuch a turn of mind, may not they have imagined thoſe parts of our bodies, of which we have two, to be male and female, and this opinion actually occurs in the Arabic, Syriac, and Hebrew languages; and theſe languages may be ſaid equally to favour both ſexes. To the double members they give a maſculine termination and a feminine conſtruction *(n)*; and in a paſſage of the ſecond book of Chronicles, where mention is made of the cherubs two wings, the conſtruction even alternates, being maſculine for the right wing and feminine for the left (*o*).

On conſidering that the Hebrews uſe a ſimilar licence relatively to the names of animals, and that often, without the leaſt regard to the ani-

(*m*) Chap. XXXVI.

(n) For this I refer the reader to Eſpenius's Arabic grammar, p. 135, to the Syriac grammar of M. Michaelis, profeſſor at Hull, p. 30; and the Hebrew grammar, by M. Michaelis, profeſſor at Gottingen, p. 226, is a farther proof of this peculiarity.

(o) 2 Chronicles iii. 11. The following tranſlation in barbarous Latin may clear up this to thoſe who are unacquainted with the Hebrew.

Et ala *cherubi alterius* exporrectus *erat* ad *parietem* templi et ala altera conjuncta *alæ cherubi prioris*

mal's

mal's ſex, they conſtrue as feminine words of a maſculine termination; and that this mode of conſtruction is particular to this claſs of nouns and relative to the double ſex of animals, their affecting for the double members a ſingularity ſo very remote from the genius of other languages, will be the leſs queſtioned.

There is a kind of calcareous earth, reſembling meal, of which inventive hunger has often made uſe in times of dearth; and by ſeveral it has even been accounted real meal, and a donation of heavenly bounty for the relief of the indigent: and this miſtake has procured it in the German language a name which may be rendered *mountain-meal (p)*. This name is univerſally uſed, and the learned themſelves, to be underſtood, are obliged to conform to it; thus it will in its turn be a means of perpetuating the miſtake from whence it took its riſe, a miſtake by which thouſands perhaps have ſuffered, and will ſuffer. But this laſt conſideration belongs to my third ſection.

(p) Bergmehl. M. Geſner who did me the honour of reading over this piece after the firſt edition of it at Berlin, informs me of an objection which ſeems well grounded. Inſtead of the miſtake giving riſe to the name, he rather thinks that the name occaſions the fatal miſtake. Whatever is like meal, whatever ſeems to have been pulveriſed may in the German language be called *mehl* meal, as in ſome parts of Germany wood reduced to duſt by worms is called worm-mehl. This opinion of Mr. Geſner's is farther countenanced by etymology: *mehl* meal being derived from *mahlen* to grind, conſequently this inſtance belongs to the third ſection.

Concerning this production, Mr. Da Coſta in his hiſtory of foſſils has the following particulars: in England we are not deſtitute of this earth, the quarries of Oxfordſhire afford it. and Dr. Woodward received it from the late quarries at Colly Weſton in Northamptonſhire. It is very frequently found in the fiſſures of ſtone in the quarries about Sherbourne, in Glouceſterſhire, looſe along with the ſpare. I have likewiſe found it greatly mixed with ſpar in the coal pits of Leiceſterſhire and Derbyſhire. Its medical uſes are many.

In Malta it abounds and the inhabitants make it into ſmall cakes, which they ſtamp with the figures of ſaints, eſpecially of St. Paul, indeed they generally call it *gratia di St. Paulo.*

SECTION II.

Of the advantageous influence of languages on opinions.

THE proofs of the advantageous influence of language on opinions I reduce to a few claſſes, the number of which unqueſtionably might be greatly augmented, but I ſhall not ſo much as go about an enumeration of them; the ſubject I well know is inexhauſtible.

I. There are happy etymologies, they comprehend accurate deſcriptions, real definitions, which clear the meanings and diſperſe that kind of miſt in which they are ſo often involved. Theſe etymologies, beſides preventing many errors and altercations about words, make known to him whoſe happineſs it is to meet with ſuch in his language, I ſay they immediately make known to him truths of which, philoſophers, leſs favoured by their language, purchaſe the attainment by laborious ſtudy.

When we either pronounce or hear the word *glory*, we all think ſomething, and in ſome meaſure the ſame thing. We underſtand the word, but as to its etymology we are totally in the dark, it conveys no more inſtruction to us than if we had made uſe of an Algebraic character, for inſtance expreſſing glory by Z. This word does not make known to us in what glory conſiſts, it rectifies no error, it does not undeceive either the hare-brained hero, infatuated with the phantom of glory, nor the ſaturnine moraliſt who affects a contempt of it. The very philoſopher, miſled by an arbitrary ſound which cuſtom has annexed to ſo many confuſed ideas, and often to very falſe ideas, will give us falſe definitions. This has been the caſe more than once. *Glory* has been confounded with the cauſe productive of it, I mean with internal perfection; it has been defined *the ſum of all our perfections*, and, in conformity to that notion, we have been taught that the glory of God does not depend on his creatures, nor the glory of the wiſe man on what others think of him. Theſe doctrines which, in the main, turn only on an ambiguity, are with many become

ſo

ſo ſacred and reſpectable that their zeal would be extremely offended againſt any who ſhould take it into their heads to conteſt them. If this definition, however, be juſt, either the philoſopher from whom we received it, or our language muſt be without a word for expreſſing the favourable opinion the world entertains of our good actions.

The Greek language has a great advantage in this point. The word Δοξα, which ſignifies glory, is, at the ſame time, a real definition of it, and a definition pregnant with conſequences. This word properly means *opinion*, and is made uſe of to denote *glory*, as conſiſting in the good opinion the world has of us (*q*). Εν δοξη εἶναι *is to be in the good opinion of others (r)*, and δόκιμος, is one of whom the public has a good opinion.

Thus, the Greeks could not but know in what glory conſiſts; this etymology was continually putting them in mind of it; and to imagine that there could be any ſuch thing as glory independantly of the high opinion entertained of our talents and virtues, they muſt have forgotten their very mother-tongue. As for the metaphyſician, it was ſcarce poſſible for him to deviate from the common mode of thinking, ſo far as to pretend, that God enjoys glory amidſt the ſolitude of eternity; and if an affectation of paradox, or a want of attending to the language, had carried him to that abſurdity, there was no Greek ſo void of ſenſe as not to ſee that God's perfections could not be acknowledged or celebrated whilſt God alone exiſted.

This idea of glory which the Greek expreſſion conveyed, farther ſhewed, that it was not to be attained by guilt, violence, and devaſtation, but by virtues, by generoſity and benevolence; this, in conſequence, made glory to be a real good; for, if we conſider how much our proſperity or adverſity, our happineſs or unhappineſs, depend on others, their good or bad opinion certainly will not be a matter of indifference to us; and that miſanthropical doctor, who repreſents glory to us as an airy vapour, as a

(*q*) See a work of M. Geſner's, intituled Ariſtotelea de Gloria.

(*r*) Σπαρτιητέων δοκιμος, *one regarded among the Spartans* or of whom all the Spartans had a good opinion, as Lycurgus is called in Herodotus, l. 1. Δόκιμος τοῖς ανθρωποις. Romans xiv. 18. who has a good character, and is eſteemed among men.

chimera,

chymera, teaches a doctrine not leſs diſſonant from human nature, and to the ſituation we are placed in here below, than as if he was to exhort us to be independant like the Deity, and, like him, to ſtand in no need of the aſſiſtance and good offices of another. In this view the deſire of glory, that deſire ſo vilified, becomes a commendable diſpoſition, tending to make of all mankind a ſociety of brethren, prompting every one to ſeek the approbation of his fellow creatures, and to acquire it by a decent and virtuous behaviour.

To give a clear notion of glory to the four bigot, who profeſſes the moſt ſupercilious contempt of it is, I own, no eaſy matter; and were it poſſible to bring him to better thoughts, it would be effected in Greek ſooner than in any other language. You are are obliged, would I ſay to him, to ſeek that glory which conſiſts in a good reputation: the moſt natural puniſhment annexed to bad actions is the loſs of honour: to make light of this, is ſhaking off the only curb which, humanly ſpeaking, can keep you to your duty: you will gradually become a profligate, hardened in guilt, and then to be dealt with only by bodily puniſhment.

It cannot be imagined how much good is contained in etymology. It is a treaſure of ſenſe, knowledge, and wiſdom: it includes truths which moſt philoſophers do not ſee into, and will one day immortalize the philoſopher who ſhall diſcover them, without ſo much as having himſelf apprehended, that, from time immemorial, they have been in every body's mouth. This is not at all ſtrange. Languages are an accumulation of the wiſdom and genius of nations, and to which every one has contributed ſomething: let not this be underſtood of the learned only, who, on the contrary, have often but a narrow genius, who are ſtill more often blinded by prepoſſeſſion, and who, after all, ſcarce make the hundredth part of mankind. The bare man of wit perhaps is a larger contributor, and the illiterate has often a greater ſhare in it, his thoughts being, as I may ſay, more nearly allied to nature. The heretic ſhall ſometimes contribute to it what the orthodox preacher will carefully avoid, the former thinking more freely, and his point of view being leſs confined. It is likewiſe not ſeldom ſeen that even the orthodox, the moſt exaſperated againſt hereſies, ſhall yet adopt their language, if they are but ſtrangers to the mint where

where it was coined. The genius even of children, when in their firſt vigour, and void of all prejudices, ſhall produce happy ſtrokes, bold aſſociations of ideas, yet evidently true, all increaſing and enriching this national treaſure. Cheerfulneſs, which utters truths unknowingly, ſprightly company, wine which expands the genius, poetry which, in its enthuſiaſm, brings forth ſo many novelties, medlies of truth and fiction, are all ſo many ſources conveying into the languages their peculiar expreſſions. Suppoſe this to have gone on twenty or forty centuries; during this ſpace of time many truths, at firſt admitted and afterwards rejected, as likewiſe many truths never taken notice of as ſuch, and looked only as mere witticiſms, have, however, met with an expreſſion or phraſe in which they have been retained, and thus perpetually incorporated with the language. Should the virtue of Quinquina, (the Jeſuits bark) through the negligence of the phyſicians, or the return of univerſal barbariſm, come to be miſtaken or forgotten in Germany, with only the bare name remaining, the bare name would ſufficiently inform our poſterity of the uſe of Quinquina among us (*s*): ſo that language is a kind of archives, where the diſcoveries of men are ſafe from any accidents, archives which are proof againſt fire, and which cannot be deſtroyed but with the total ruin of the people.

Grammarians often beſtow very great encomiums on etymology. That it never proves the truth of a propoſition I allow; but it preſerves truths; it is a kind of library, containing a great number of uſeful diſcoveries. It includes in one word as much good philoſophy as any ſyſtem whatever. I farther allow, that this fountain of truths may become a fountain of errors, when the grammarian or philoſopher are for drawing from it proof of their aſſertions or real definitions, its ſtream is not perfectly pure, truths and errors float in it confuſedly intermixed.

Etymological propoſitions I think may be compared to thoſe looſe detached propoſitions, of which collections are publiſhed under the title of *Thoughts*, without adducing any kind of proof. What I perceive in every etymology is, that, in ſuch or ſuch a nation, ſome body has thought

(*s*) Quinquina is in German called *Fieberrinde*, i. e. fever-bark, or the febrigue-bark or rind.

thus

thus or thus; but to know whether his thoughts be right or wrong requires a particular inquiry, which has nothing to do with etymology. Here again it will bear a compariſon with libraries, the good and the bad being intermixed in them. A ſenſible man will never ſubſcribe to a phyloſophical theſis only from having ſeen it in black and white in ſome corner of a library; neither will he explode the uſe of libraries purely becauſe old books contain a great many falſities, or becauſe the truths to be met with in them are not accompanied with their proofs: ſome, on the contrary, will be the better pleaſed with this omiſſion of the proofs, as leaving to the reflective reader the honour and ſatisfaction of finding them out.

The learned, the reformers of ſciences, the diſcoverers of new truths etymology furniſhes with the means of ſpreading and perpetuating their diſcoveries. They will be preſerved much more ſecurely in a name adapted to the genius of the language than in periſhable books, the faſhion of which paſſeth away, that after a certain time, they are no longer read. But the grand ſecret is to bring this name into vogue; the coining of it is eaſy, but not ſo the making it current; in this only claſſic authors can ſucceed, and eſpecially poets, to whom this honour ſeems peculiarly reſerved. That extreme care and delicacy with which the antients applied themſelves to purify and embeliſh their language, was ſo very far from being a ridiculous pedantry, that our literati ſhould imitate their application. How is the merit of poetry inhanced in the mouth of a great genius? a merit abundantly rewarding thoſe hours which his commerce with the muſes has deprived him of. Suppoſe the illuſtrious Mr. Haller, who, to the moſt extenſive knowledge of botany, joins the moſt elevated ſpirit of poetry, and who, both in proſe and verſe, is one of the fineſt writers in all Germany. Suppoſe, I ſay, he were, both in his poems and other writings, to diſtinguiſh by particular names thoſe parts of the vegetables which characteriſe their ſex, calling them, for inſtance, *the male and the female*, theſe appellations once received, would not only immortalize in Germany one of the fineſt modern diſcoveries, but would render this diſcovery intelligible to every one. Now what a ſervice would this be to the nation and to truth?

There

There is another cauſe of this great fecundity of etymologies: ſeveral objects have undergone ſo many changes, that it is extremely difficult to know them again diſtinctly; and habits familiarizing us with them from our early infancy, hinders our fixing them, and pointing out their characteriſtical marks. This inconveniency does not take place in things not beginning to exiſt, or at leaſt not known till after the formation of the language. That language which ſees them come into being can characteriſe them by the moſt ſuitable names. Had God permitted a man to have been a ſpectator of his proceſs in the creation, and to have ſeen the bodies compoſe themſelves before his face by the coalition of their reſpective elements, would he not of all men be the beſt qualified to give us exact deſcriptions of all natural things, and would not theſe deſcriptions greatly ſurpaſs all the elaborate publications of chymiſts, naturaliſts, and academies, after ſo many years of aſſiduous inveſtigation? Now I ſay, that languages are inveſted with the like advantages with reſpect to certain moral relations or combinations, introduced into ſocieties already formed. This I ſhall prove from marriage.

The common people, it is ſufficiently known, have but vague and defective notions concerning it; the eccleſiaſtical ceremony is all the difference they know of, between marriage and a criminal co-habitation, and this is owing to their being without ſuch a definition as will ſettle their ideas: but even thoſe of the learned themſelves are, on this point, often very faulty: marriage, with them, is a contract for life, with bodily commerce and the breeding of children as its object. If this be a complete definition, I conceive that the magiſtrate may, under ſeveral penalties or a pecuniary fine, prohibit the contracting of marriage without previouſly ſolemnizing it, either by the office of the church or ſome other public ceremony: but he has no right to annul marriages contracted without any of theſe forms; and in ſo doing he countervenes the maxims of the Chriſtian religion, by which the conjugal tie is indiſoluble, with exception of one caſe only. As little would he be authoriſed to invalidate clandeſtine marriages, contracted againſt the known inclination of the parents. Our laws in making them void, become contrary to religion; and thoſe Engliſh divines who have

charged the act of parliament againſt ſuch marriages as a breach of the law of God, will be in the right *(t)*.

It may perhaps be thought that this definition will be rendered complete and unexceptionable by adding the word *lawful(u)*. If this word be taken in a ſenſe oppoſite to *fraudulent*, real marriage will often be confounded with fornication. Suppoſe, for inſtance, one of the contracting parties, with a view of defrauding the other, ſets up for a fortune beyond what he in reality is poſſeſſed of, this contract unqueſtionably is fraudulent; yet does it conſtitute a marriage; and to go about annulling ſuch contracts, would occaſion difficulties without end.

This definition therefore being manifeſtly deficient, let us ſee wherein its defect lies, and how it may be amended. A man and a woman enter into an agreement to live together, and to bring up the children which ſhall be born by ſuch cohabitation; ſome gallants, in the mean time, are for ſeducing the woman, or even attempt to carry her off: the man has no right to oppoſe them, nor can he, without going beyond an allowable defence, either make uſe of violence againſt the ſeducers, detain the woman againſt her will, or in any wiſe compel her to make good her engagement. That ſhe is in the wrong to break her promiſes I allow; but it is not for him to do himſelf juſtice; as a member of ſociety, he is to ſet down quietly under this diſturbance of his amour, and not break the public peace. On the other hand, the magiſtracy owes him no protection, as having never taken on themſelves the guaranty of ſuch contract. I aſk, whether this can be called a marriage? No, it is evidently no more than concubinage, to which nothing of what laws, either divine or human, have preſcribed, concerning the indiſſolubility of matrimonial engagements is applicable. Hence I perceive what muſt be added to the definition to make it complete: marriage is not barely a contract, but *a contract entered into under the protection and the guaranty of the laws*. In the ſtate of nature,

(*t*) See *An Enquiry into the force and operation of the annulling clauſes in a late act for the better preventing of clandeſtine marriages*, London, 1754. Dr. Stebbing's *Diſſertation on the powers of ſtates to deny civil protection to the marriages of minors, made without the conſent of the parents.*

(*u*) The German word is rechtmæſſig, *i. e.* legal, juſt.

as

as being without laws, marriage is a contract, in the ſupport and maintenance of which *force may be juſtly uſed.*

The Greeks had a word which compriſed the whole of this definition: this word(*x*) equally ſignified both marriage and the law; *to be married to one, and to be joined to him by law*, were ſynonimous expreſſions. This aroſe from the Greek tongue being of a more antient date than the cuſtom of marriage, a cuſtom with which the Athenians were utterly unacquainted till the time of Cecrops, and before him it was only the mothers of children who were known. Cecrops was the firſt who introduced marriage among that rude people; and then it was manifeſt to every one that marriage is an intercourſe of the two ſexes, approved of and ſecured by the laws.

The like happy idiom is found in our language, and not improbably from the like cauſe. In old German, *law* was called *Ee* or *Eh*, that very word which now ſignifies marriage. The Engliſh, though they have the word marriage, yet to expreſs the French word *gendre*, uſe an expreſſion which beſpeaks the like origin, and may be literally rendered ſon *according to law*, that is, *ſon by marriage (y)*. But this very example leads me to a diſagreeable remark. To the generality, the treaſure of truths hidden in etymology is loſt, either from the primitive meaning of the words becoming obſolete, or that ſince annexed to them, ſo common, that the etymology is not longer diſcernible, and they are looked on as no more than arbitrary ſigns. Without having particularly ſtudied philology and Germanic antiquities, or having turned over old books and records drawn up in the German language, the word *eh* will never be known to have antiently ſignified a law. In England every body knows the meaning of *law*, but at hearing the words *ſon in law*, that meaning does not recur to the mind, and the word to a native of England conveys only the import of the French word *gendre*, or a ſon by *marriage:* thus the etymology does not lay open the

(*x*) Νομος. See M. Elſner and M. Carpzow's Commentaries on Romans c. vii. v. 1. Not that I approve of their expoſition: I only refer to it on account of their proofs for this ſignification of the word νόμος, which is none of the moſt uſual τῶ ζῶντι ἀνδρὶ δε δεται νόμῳ in the following verſes is indiſputably a periphraſtical definition of marriage.

(*y*) Son-in-law.

truth which it includes. We do not find that either the apologiſts or antagoniſts of the *marriage-act* ever in the leaſt thought that the marriage ſpoken of by Jeſus Chriſt, in the 5th chapter of St. Mathew, requires the guaranty of the laws, and that conſequently, what he ſays of it is not to be applied to concubinage. The words Νομος and γάμος νομιμος, might give the Greeks a clearer inſight into this article: they were not become of ſuch common uſe as to hide their etymologies, γάμος alone being the word ordinarily uſed.

Many of the terms of our living languages are become ſo familiar to us, that their derivation eſcapes us; but with dead languages it is otherwiſe, as we make uſe of them more rarely, the etymological truths latent in them are not ſo eaſily loſt; beſides we are better acquainted with their etymologies, as being a branch of literature. This it is that makes us ſo apt to think their etymologies more ſignificant, and their nomenclature more proper; in ſhort, to give them the preference above living languages, which perhaps is more than they can abſolutely claim. In theſe judgments there is always ſome partiality; we eſteem the ſciences according to the time and trouble the acquiſition of them coſt us; but the more this foible, ſo common throughout the learned world, ſwells the encomiums laviſhed on the dead languages, the greater ſuſpicion it brings on thoſe elogiums. I thought it my duty to declare againſt this injuſtice to our mother tongues.

SECTION.

SECTION III.

The names given to things often tend to create love or hatred of them, as repreſenting them either good or evil, and this again is a ſtriking influence of the language on opinions.

THE inoculation of the ſmall pox is an expreſſion quite indifferent, only deſcriptive of the operation, without raiſing any prejudice for or againſt it. Had this inſertion been called the *Turkiſh or Tartarian ſmall pox*, from the countries where it had its origin, it would certainly have met with much greater oppoſition, ſo as, perhaps, not to have got footing; and, on the other hand, had it been named *a ſtratagem againſt the ſmall pox*, or ſome ſuch alluring appellation, it would not be ſo exclaimed againſt, at leaſt not be looked on as a crime. In a word, were inoculation ſtiled *the preſerver of beauty*, as, if I miſtake not, the Circaſſians call the ſmall pox *the enemy of beauty*; opinions would be divided, the fair ſex would cry up inoculation, and gloomy moraliſts loaded it with invectives.

Whilſt ſcholars and legiſlators overlook ſuch artifices, the bulk of a people and parental fondneſs, which nothing eſcapes, take advantage of ſuch deficiency. The German peaſant mentions thunder with an epithet which tends to abate terror, repreſenting it as a benefit (*y*), which likewiſe is not improper, as in reality fertilizing the country. Some provinces uſe ſimilar expreſſion: *The good old man is paſſing along the air* (*z*); the good old man is God, and his paſſing along the air is the thunder.

To this propriety may be referred even the cuſtom of thoſe languages, in which the name of the Supreme Being is taken from the attribute of goodneſs. That this is the caſe of the German word *Gott* is well

(*y*) Das liebe Gewitter, i. e. *the dear thunder*; if I may be allowed this Germaniſm.
(*z*) *Der gute Alte fæhret.*

known;

known; but, in the Hebrew, it is ſtill more remarkable. In ſeveral eaſtern languages God was repreſented as an object of terror (*a*), and it might be to prevent the pernicious influences of ſuch a repreſentation, that the Hebrew tongue has adopted the word *El*, which is peculiar to it, and quite foreign from the other oriental languages. This name is derived from a word ſignifying beneficence (*b*), and conveys the idea of a beneficent God. I am very well aware, that commonly a different etymology is given to it; but, in my opinion, erroneouſly *(c)*.

All this does not, however, hinder but that it may often be right for a language to have indifferent names, in which no judgment is implied, no acceſſory idea conveyed to the mind. The opinion of the firſt nomenclator may have been an error or prejudice, and by means of the language, this prejudice ſpreads, which is not the caſe when there is a neutral or indifferent word for expreſſing the ſame thing.

Acceſſory ideas often operate in a manner ſtill more latent. A word likewiſe has often ſeveral ſignifications, and we, chuſing that which is not applicable to the ſubject in queſtion, are unawares drawn into errors: therefore, to have neutral, or, if I may be allowed the phraſe, perfectly impartial terms, implying no ſecondary idea of either blame or praiſe is an advantage. Here is a proof of it, which, at the ſame time, gives me an

(*a*) פחד Gen. xxxi. 53. מורא Pſ. lxxvi. 12. אימים Jer. l. 38. מפלאת 1 Reg. xv. 13. Pſ. xl. 5. and in the Syriac text *Ercho*. A modern learned writer has even derived from terror the moſt uſual appellation of God among the Hebrews, that of אלה.

Concerning this ſee Mr. Michaelis's work, *On the Methods uſed for underſtanding the antient Hebrew*, which together with Mr. Hume's *natural hiſtory of Religion*, will afford a conſiderable ſupplement to the remarks contained in this firſt ſection.

(*b*) الي

(*c*) Aquila tranſlates אל the *mighty God*, and though his authority be not of the greateſt weight, he has been followed by the generality of French, Engliſh, Daniſh, and Swediſh expoſitors. Even the German catechiſm has fallen into this miſtake, though Luther had guarded againſt it, in his verſion of the Bible. They who render it the *mighty God*, deduce this word from the root איל, whereas the rules of grammar will ſcarce admit of ſuch a derivation. 1. Becauſe in the word אליערד no vowel appears under the letter א. 2. Becauſe whenever that word denotes the Deity, it is not written איל but אל, without *Jod*.

opportunity

opportunity of congratulating my mother tongue on ſome pre-eminences which it has above the Latin.

The ſupreme, or, as ſome chuſe to term it, the ultimate good, that good to which all others are ſubſervient, as the means are ſo the ends; and no farther good, than in their relation to it. This good, I ſay, Epicurus placed in pleaſurable ſenſations; but, as the Latin word for ſuch ſenſation equally denoted voluptuouſneſs, it conveyed an acceſſary idea of a ſoftneſs or luxury ſcarce compatible with virtue or courage. Can it be doubted but that, in this view, Epicurus's doctrine muſt have appeared to many Romans, not only ill grounded, but even contemptible and execrable; and yet this was no more than a miſunderſtanding, owing to a deficiency in the Latin tongue: this Cicero's declamations, which are full of ambiguities, ſufficiently prove. The Latin word ever conveyed the idea of voluptuouſneſs; and what ſucceſs could a philoſophy, which eſtemeed voluptuouſneſs as the ſupreme good, and as the ultimate end of all our actions, promiſe itſelf among a people who was ſcarce acquainted with any other virtues than the military, or any other pleaſures than carnage and victory.

What epicures termed *voluptas*, our language would have called *pleaſureable ſenſation*, leaving no ambiguity, and this denomination would have given no offence either to the auſtere moraliſt, or the brave warrior. Suppoſe I put this queſtion to a man; " how is it that certain things appear to " us goods, and other evils? that we eagerly purſue ſome, and as eagerly " ſhun others? you deſire glory, health, and cheerfulneſs, is it not ſo? " you avoid contempt, pain, ſickneſs, and melancholy, and will never " willingly expoſe yourſelf to theſe ſituations, unleſs occaſionally and con- " ſidered as means for averting a greater evil, or obtaining a good which is " more than an equivalent to theſe evils. What is the cauſe of your de- " ſires? This cauſe or that by reaſon of which objects wearing the " aſpect of goods pleaſe us is called the ſupreme good, the ultimate " good, or the end of goods. Now, I ſay, that this good is reducible to " a pleaſurable ſenſation, a ſenſation which admits of no farther analyſis, " which has no connection with any end beyond it, and with which the

" ſoul

" ſoul is pleaſurably affected, without knowing wherefore. But we know " that the greater the ſum of theſe ſenſations, the more we have of them " in a given time, and the more intenſe and laſting they are, the greater " our happineſs: that it is only multiplying theſe three quantities, the ſum, " the intenſeneſs, and the duration one by the other, and the reſult gives you " the true greatneſs of the good." He to whom I ſhall have explained myſelf in ſuch a manner, will be eaſily convinced, and I ſhall not meet with that chicanery and abuſe which the Roman orator threw out ſo very illiberally againſt the Grecian philoſopher, not that I, by any means, pretend to ſtand forth as an apologiſt of Epicurus, or maintain that his diſciples, and perhaps himſelf, deceived by the ambiguity, may not ſometimes have confounded the pleaſurable ſenſation with voluptuouſneſs.

A copiouſneſs of fit words for denoting all the works of nature, and of art, and whatever relates to morals; in a word, whatever may come into the mind of the ſcholar and the plebeian, and thoſe words, not borrowed from a foreign language: ſuch a copiouſneſs muſt neceſſarily be of great ſervice for the improvement of ſciences. Objects without a name ſeldom fix our attention, whereas thoſe which are diſtinguiſhed by appellations, leave laſting impreſſions on us: many are the differences which the deaf overlook: their attention to thoſe of trees and plants, which have ſome reſemblance, will not be ſo exact as in him who is converſant with the language. The want of expreſſions produces a like effect, and the copiouſneſs of them acts contrarily. Where a language is rich it imports a tincture of knowledge even to the common man: things become known to him, which without the aſſiſtance of his language he would ever have remained ignorant of; he obſerves the courſe of nature better, and finds himſelf capable of communicating experiments to the more learned, which otherwiſe would have been loſt; yet, ſuch as are not always beneath their notice. On the other hand, they who have devoted themſelves to the ſciences will naturally, and without any premeditated ſtudy, familiarize themſelves in their early youth with many notions, which, any where elſe, would have coſt them much cloſe application, even in a more advanced age.

What

What an advantage would it be to us had all vegetables German names, equally known to the people and the naturaliſts? What an eaſe would this be to the ſtudy of Botany? the memory would then be relieved from the load of a crabbed Nomenclature; which at leaſt makes one half of the elements of that ſcience; the names of the vegetables being already known to us, the whole buſineſs would be to remember their figure. What a difficulty is the lover of Botany put to in learning that multitude of foreign appellations, which with their Greek or Latin terminations diſguſt his ear? eſpecially if, which is frequently the caſe, he is not ſuch a maſter of thoſe languages, as to be able to help himſelf by means of the etymology.

The Greeks and Latins, it muſt be owned, had conveniences which are wanting to us; but as they out-do us in this reſpect, they are no leſs outdone by the Orientals. The richneſs of the Arabic and Hebrew comes little ſhort of that of nature itſelf. Every individual product of nature, in thoſe countries, has a name taken from the particular ſtock of thoſe languages, and theſe names are ſo frequently made uſe of by the very poets, and in books of mere entertainment, that the literati and the wits could not well be ignorant of them; even they who did not make natural hiſtory their ſtudy, met with them in their reading, and they, as it were, obtruded themſelves on them in their cloſets.

Such a happy conſtitution of the national language, not only ſaves the profeſſed Botaniſt much time and trouble, but the people in general ſhall be better acquainted with the works of nature than we are. There will ſcarce be any one without ſome ſuperficial knowledge of the vegetable kingdom: curioſity animated by leiſure, and the facility of gratifying itſelf, will endeavour after improvements, and the number of intelligent Botaniſts will increaſe. The gardener and the ruſtic, underſtanding thoſe Adepts, will beſtow more attention on natural productions, and thus come to be a kind of connoiſſeurs. Omitting the increaſe of wiſdom and happineſs in a nation, as it improves in knowledge, it is ſufficient for my purpoſe that Botany is improved there. In Germany, for one real Botaniſt, we may, at any time, reckon a thouſand perſons who have not the leaſt idea of that ſcience: they walk about in the fields, amidſt a rich diſplay of nature's various productions, but they are blind, and are ſo only for

want of fit words to diſtinguiſh the productions. Yet, can it be denied that, were this impediment removed, more diſcoveries might not be expected from theſe thouſand men than can be hoped for from the application of a ſingle Botaniſt? It is a queſtion, whether the diſcovery of effects of plants, both ſalutary and noxious, and the human and animal ſpecies are leſs owing to accident than to inveſtigation; and he to whoſe eyes the operations of nature continually preſent themſelves ſhall ſooner hit on this chance, than he who only now and then beſtows an excurſion of a few hours in prying into them. But of what uſe will that important accident be to the former, if ignorant of what he ſhould attend to, if unacquainted with the diſtinction of plants, if he looks on them only as an inſignificant part of that variegated carpet with which the ſurface of the earth is covered?

Though I cannot ſay that the before-mentioned nations have availed themſelves of that ſuperiority of their languages ſo far as they might; yet to me it appears out of all queſtion, that the vegetable kingdom was better known to the antient eaſtern literati, than it is to the modern. For this I only appeal to the books of the Old Teſtament, the ſubject of which is either hiſtorical or theological, and which were written with quite another view than teaching Botany, and yet they furniſh us with above two hundred and fifty names of vegetables: now the writers who have made uſe of thoſe names both in proſe and metre, were not Botaniſts by profeſſion, that in all probability, ſuch kind of knowledge muſt in thoſe times have been very common.

In order to ſet the advantages of ſuch languages in a ſtill clearer light, and point out the methods by which others may obtain the like advantages, I ſhall examine the cauſes of the want of them in the German. It is not its poverty, being intrinſically very rich, that any impoveriſhment of it muſt be partly imputed even to its very richneſs, and partly to an extreme degeneracy in thoſe who ſpeak it.

I aſk a peaſant the name of a plant; he tells me it has no name; now even this is no proof of the poverty of the language; it may only ſhew the peaſant's ignorance, or that of his whole village, or of his diſtrict. How can it be thought that the treaſure of botanical terms ſhould be preſerved among the

loweſt

loweſt claſs of mankind, among the poor cottagers, who harraſſed with labour and diſtreſs, cannot be ſuppoſed to advert much to things from which they neither expect good or harm. I then apply to a Botaniſt, and he ſends me away with a Latin word; he knows no other; nay, he knows not ſo much as the German names of ſeveral plants, which any peaſant could tell me. From all this it does not, however, follow that the plant in hand has abſolutely no name; it may perhaps be met with in ſome province of Germany; but lying dormant there, and being ſtill leſs known to the learned, it is of no uſe to the ſciences, and might as well not exiſt. Things grow continually worſe and worſe; the country people ſucceſſively forget ſome of theſe names, which are ſo many loſſes, the continuance of which impoveriſh a language. Theſe words beingun known to the learned, cannot be preſerved in their works. Several vegetables are proſcribed by poetry, and cannot gain admittance, neither under their popular names, nor under the technical denominations. The former are too mean, the latter have an uncouth ſound, or would diſorder the cadence of the line.

Viſit the different countries of Germany, and inſtead of complaining of the want of names, you will rather complain of a ſuper-abundance, and its great inconveniencies. You will find that the plant which you imagine to have no name has ſeveral, but they are only provincial names. The language of the inhabitants of Miznia is Hebrew to the Swiſſer, and as little does the Leipziger underſtand that of Lower Saxony: nay, what is much more, I have myſelf ſeen Botaniſts of great reputation, reject the German names of certain plants as barbarous, finding fault with thoſe that uſe them, and adviſing them to ſubſtitute Latin terms, yet thoſe German names go current at Leipzig and its environs, both among the commonalty and the gentry: and if this city be in reality the ſeat of the German language, they could not be reckoned provincial or country words, that if not underſtood, the fault was in the readers, and not in the writers.

And whence comes it that they are ſo little underſtood? The whole blame lies on our Botaniſts, who are ſo infatuated with the Latin nomenclature, ſo far as to exclude that of their own country, and even blame the uſe of it. Other literati do the like, the leſs affinity an expreſſion has with the

German, in their eſtimate, the more elegant, the more it captivates them under the parade of erudition ; our vernacular expreſſions they baniſh to the villages, pronouncing them coarſe and mean, and vilifying them till they have quite exploded them out of the language. What are we the better in having, for inſtance, three or four names for the ſame plant, when neither of them can come to be claſſical ; now this is an honour no name can attain till ſome famous Botaniſt ſhall make uſe of it both in his writings and lectures, leaving to the Latin word the inferior office of explaining it, whereas it is directly the contrary : the explanatory part is ſometimes aſſigned to the German name, and even this is reckoned as no ſmall favour done to it.

It will perhaps be ſaid that the import of the Latin names is more fixed and definitive ; but that is manifeſtly falſe, without diſtorting the ſenſe from that which they bear in pure Latin ; and if that be all, I do not ſee why the import of the German terms may not be changed for an artificial one adapted to the ſyſtem.

This therefore is not the real cauſe why our Botaniſts ſpeak Latin ; it lies in a fantaſtical mode, which has crept into the German univerſities. The uſing Latin, which the other faculties have almoſt every where departed from in their lectures, is ſtill retained in phyſic, and without any apparent reaſon, the ſtudents in phyſic being generally, of any other claſs, the leaſt acquainted with Latin. Botany, however, accounted a branch of phyſic, is taught in Latin, and the auditors know of no other terms than thoſe they have learned from their maſters.

Though I am very far from the leaſt thought of contributing to exclude the Latin tongue from the univerſities, I own, I could wiſh, and I think the love of my country warrants ſuch a wiſh, that it would relinquiſh Botany and natural hiſtory to our own language. Let all the other ſciences be taught in Latin ; yet be thoſe excepted of which we are partly to collect the materials among the country people : what ſhall we be the better for their diſcoveries, if we do not underſtand their ſpeech ? Beſides, the Latin tongue is very unfit for natural hiſtory : the beſt judges will tell you that with regard to a great number both of vegetables and animals, it is

ſtill

ſtill very uncertain whether they formerly bore thoſe names which the moderns have given them. In ſhort, we have every motive for diſmiſſing the Latin language out of botanical auditories, where it is ſo manifeſtly improper. The many faults committed there againſt proſody, not to ſay againſt grammar, are inſupportable to every Latin ear, and it is ſcarce poſſible but that youth muſt contract a vicious pronunciation. I ſhould therefore think that neither the lovers of Latin or of Botany, would object againſt the ſuppreſſion of ſo fantaſtical and pernicious a cuſtom. I could heartily intreat our Botanical profeſſors, to ſhew their love to their country, ſo far as to deliver their lectures in its language. I remember to have heard one of the moſt eminent among them ſay: that were all Baron Wolfe's other merits diſputed, there was one which muſt inconteſtibly be allowed him, his having added a new degree of perfection to the German tongue, by applying it to philoſophy. Much more neceſſary would it be to apply it to Botany, and much eaſier would be the taſk; it would be only collecting the names of which the language is already poſſeſſed, and this very collection is partly made by the care and diligence of former Botaniſts. It only requires to be made uſe of, and certainly it would not long remain neglected, did we conſider that to improve our language is really augmenting our national ſtock of knowledge and wiſdom. The riches of nature are loſt to thoſe who know not how to name them; whereas give them names derived from the language of the country, and they will be taken notice of by multitudes, who otherwiſe ſcarce caſt an eye on them or very ſuperficially. Many other wiſhes could I mention, would bare wiſhes do. I could wiſh, for inſtance, that we had German names for whole claſſes, as for *Monandria*, *Diandria*, &c. theſe names when once in vogue, would greatly facilitate the Botanical ſyſtems, and bring them within the capacity of the moſt illiterate; the ſenſe of them would be got amidſt diverſions, and in our walks. I could likewiſe wiſh that each conſtituent part of vegetables had its particular term. The Orientals have a diſtinct word for expreſſing the *virgin-herb*, and another for the *fecundated-herb* (*e*), which certainly is to the praiſe of their language.

(*e*) *Herba virgo & maritata*, the former is called דשא the latter עשב.

Our

Our language has a great pre-eminence relatively to the mineral kingdom, and whatever concerns *metallurgy* and *mineralogy*, moſt European languages borrowing from it; but infinitely more advantageous would this copiouſneſs be to us could we transfer it to Botany. Mines being but thinly ſown, the terms relating to thoſe ſciences, are, in the greater part of the empire, as little known as if they were Chineſe words: I proceed to other examples.

Our commonalty fill the whole extent from the earth to the firmament with air, and imagine it to be every where the ſame matter. The Greeks could eaſily guard againſt this error; their language diſtinguiſhes the atmoſphere from the *ether*, or celeſtial matter by two diſtinct words, expreſſing thoſe two bodies ſeparately.

Some virtues are more ſedulouſly inculcated by moraliſts and philoſophers when the language has fit names for indicating them; whereas they are but ſuperficially treated of, or rather neglected in nations where ſuch virtues have not ſo much as a name. The antients cried up, and perhaps too highly, that independency of the wiſe man, which renders him ſelf-ſufficient, that his happineſs is not connected with external things. Among the moderns, little or no mention is made of ſuch a quality.

A language abounding in terms which at once denote great numbers, without particularizing the multiplication from which they ariſe, forms the mathematical genius, helping it to repreſent to itſelf very conſiderable qualities without any meditation: this is daily ſeen. Every homeſpun ruſtic knows the difference between *thouſand* and *hundred:* and no very cultivated mind, at leaſt no profoundity in geometry is required to comprehend the import of a *hundred thouſand, two hundred thouſand*; but on coming to numbers of which the names are exotic, then it is that we enter on darkneſs. Women, the illiterate, not a few trades people, otherwiſe pretty well acquainted with figures; nay, even ſome literati confound *million* with a *hundred thouſand:* and though you explain the difference of them over and over, it ſoon gives their memory the ſlip. As to billions, trillions, &c. theſe they account inconceivable numbers, that to them theſe

theſe words convey only a vague idea of ſome immenſe quantity. Now, a mind which, beyond a certain quantity, ſees only a confuſed immenſity, the meaſurement of which overwhelms it, will never make a figure in Geometry.

I ſhall ſhew, by five compariſons, how the richneſs of a language may influence arithmetical ideas, and to this purpoſe ſucceſſively compare with our language the condition of a people without a language, a poorer language, a richer language; and laſtly, two poſſible languages.

To form diſtinct ideas of numbers, beyond what imagination can take in at once, would be extremely difficult, without a language and without emblems to ſupply the want of it. Some have judged this could not be beyond three; I am inclined to think, that the number of our fingers being continually before our eyes, might raiſe our conception to five; but it would be hard to fix the idea of any thing above five, and of all multiples of five. He who could conceive five heaps, each of five unities, or the ſquare of five, would be a tranſcendent genius indeed.

In America there are people who cannot reckon beyond twenty; whatever exceeds that number they compare with that of their hair; a very proper expreſſion for denoting a confuſed, and, to them, indeterminable quantity: to ſuch, great numbers muſt appear ſomething, of which no preciſe idea is to be formed. How far muſt their mathematical notions be from thoſe of our peaſants? the moſt intelligent, unleſs endowed with an almoſt divine genius, or his ideas have been enlarged by inſtruction, will not come near their conceptions. But other influences muſt neceſſarily be the conſequences of ſuch incapacity: without ſome knowledge of figures we continually commit miſtakes.

As twenty is to thoſe people a thouſand is to us; and we have the additional advantage of multiplication. Our language can ſay a thouſand times a thouſand, and likewiſe reckon the multiples; whereas thoſe Americans know nothing of twenty times twenty, and can indicate their meaning only by the very indefinite token of ſhewing their hair. This puts me in mind of the king of the *Nine Nations*, to whom the account given him

of

of the inhabitants of London appearing beyond all belief, he ordered his envoy to count them by means of a thread, making a knot for each inhabitant. The envoy finding his commiſſion impracticable, only aſſured his ſovereign that the number of them was equal to that of the hairs of his head, and this he might ſay without the leaſt hyperbole. Were the ſtory no more than a fiction; ſtill does it very naturally repreſent the conſequences of a poor language, and holds up to us our advantages.

I have ſaid that a *thouſand*, which is our laſt numerical term, may in our language be increaſed by multiplication; yet this has its limits, and I know not whether many people are capable of forming to themſelves a diſtinct idea beyond a triple repetition of a thouſand times, that is beyond a thouſand times a thouſand times a thouſand: for my part, were it carried farther, I ſhould be obliged to have recourſe to the foreign technical terms of billion, trillion, &c. or to thoſe of fourth, fifth power, &c. But even theſe are artificial ideas, entirely owing to inſtruction, beyond the verge of our language, conſequently ſuch as are not to be expected among the bulk of mankind: let any one try to form to himſelf a clear conception of *a thouſand times a thouſand times a thouſand times a thouſand times a thouſand times a thouſand times a thouſand*; I am perſuaded that this number will not repreſent to us a greater quantity than if one of the *thouſand times* was omitted; and conſequently the total was but a thouſandth part of what it is. Let us, on the other hand, ſuppoſe that our language could, in ſimple uncompounded terms expreſs a million, a thouſand and thouſand times a thouſand millions; this it is certain would enable us to form a clear conception of numbers infinitely greater.

In this point the Greeks and Hebrews have the advantage of us, their language expreſſing ten thouſand by one word, the former by *myriad* the latter by *ribbo (f)*. From thence is compoſed *myriads* of *myriads*, ten thouſand

(f) Here may be obſerved the ſucceſſive gradations of the improvement of languages in numerical words. Names, at firſt, given to indeterminate numbers, or even to ſuch as were accounted immenſe, became, as men grew able to compute ſuch numbers, the names of determinate

thouſand times ten thouſand, a number ſtrangely perplexing even to men of great learning, that ſometimes, by a falſe calculation, they make ten millions when in reality it is a hundred millions, and ſometimes it appears to them a number immenſe beyond expreſſion. An inſtance of this is Luther himſelf, who has fallen into both theſe overſights. In a paſſage of the prophet Daniel he miſreckons, and tranſlates *ten hundred times a thouſand (g)*; in a paſſage of the Revelations, he renders the ſame expreſſion by the indeterminate quantity of *many thouſand times a thouſand* (*b*): thus thoſe people were no more at a loſs to conceive a hundred millions than we to conceive one. The Hebrews could even expreſs that immenſe number, by giving the dual termination to the word which among them indicated a myriad (*i*).

How great would be the advantages of a language having, for expreſſing numbers, ſeven ſimple words more than we have? We have the names of nine unities, thoſe of nine tens reckoned from 10 to 90; and laſtly, thoſe of the ſquare and cube of the number ten, which are *a hundred* and *a thouſand*. Now does not analogy ſeem to require, that we ſhould farther have terms for expreſſing the ten firſt powers of this num-

terminate quantities. Of μυρία, originally ſignifying innumerable, has been made μύρια, *ten thouſand*. It is the ſame with the Hebrew אלף which means a *thouſand*. It was originally the appellation of a part of a tribe, conſiſting of a number of families רבבה; or רבו *ten thouſand*, originally denotes *the multitude* in general. Had we brigades of ten thouſand men, the name of ſuch a brigade might poſſibly have raiſed our numerical terms from the third power of number 10 to its fourth power. Incidents of this kind contribute to the improvement of a language more than all the application and genius of the learned.

(*g*) Zehen hundertmal tauſend. Dan. VII. 10.

(*b*) Viel tauſendmal tauſend. Apoc. IX. 16.

(*i*) רבבה, the dual of which is רבותים, or the ſquare of ten thouſand. Pſ. LXVIII. 18. which to tranſlate twice ten thouſand, would be an incongruity; the combining, ſo inferior a number with that of a thouſand times a thouſand, would be ſomething beyond a poetical licence. The expreſſion implying *the thouſands of the re-duplication*, and which in the ſame verſe ſignifies a thouſand times a thouſand, ſufficiently ſhews the true meaning of 10,000 in the dual to be the ſquare, or ſecond power of 10,000.

ber? Were it thus, every one, with the ſlighteſt tincture of arithmetic, would as eaſily conceive ten thouſand millions as he at preſent conceives the number *thouſand*, and the ſquare of thoſe ten thouſand millions, or 100,000,000,000,000,000,000, would then be to us what the ſquare of a thouſand is at preſent. With the aſſiſtance of ſuch a language, there is no body who would not be able to form to himſelf notions of thoſe magnitudes, which are the objects of aſtronomical calculations and meaſurements; notions in which the learned themſelves are loſt, unleſs converſant with geometry.

Some eminent mathematicians have propoſed binary arithmetic, which conſiſts in making of the number two the very ſame uſe now made of the number ten. However plauſible this project may appear in one light, yet it certainly tends for to clog and confine geometrical genius, unleſs its inconvenience be remedied by coining particular names for the number two when carried to very high powers. Its tenth power makes but 1024, which is very little beyond the third power of ten, and to exceed a million, it muſt be carried to the twentieth power (*k*).

(*k*) The academy could have wiſhed that I had here mentioned Algebra, and mathematical analyſis which may be looked on as new languages, the diſcovery of which has ſo prodigiouſly extended the limits of our knowledge. I conceived it became me to keep to the words of the problem, and conſequently to ſpeak only of national languages. I, however, allow that this new point of view might lead to many very important truths and diſcoveries: and this ſubject well deſerves to be thoroughly handled by a geometrical philoſopher, to whom Algebra is, as it were, become his ſecond language. For my part I could have ſpoken but very deficiently on a ſcience which has grown into diſuſe with me for ſeveral years paſt.

SECTION

SECTION IV.

The advantageous influences of a language on opinions may be reduced to two heads; copiouſneſs of terms, and fecundity of etymologies and expreſſions.

I. TO conſider the former in all its amplitude and perfection, the idea of it might be carried ad infinitum. Whatever could be thought of muſt have a name peculiar to itſelf, and a name both national and clear, and fully expreſſive of its object without any periphraſis, it ſhould likewiſe enable the ſpeakers to repreſent the ſame object under different points of view, at leaſt, under the two principal, as indifferent, and as beneficial or hurtful, according to its real nature; nay, it would not ſeldom be neceſſary that one could even give to objects theſe three ſenſes equally: that is, when they have an advantageous ſide, and a ſide which ſhews them to diſadvantage; ſuch, for inſtance, is a too uniform and permanent happineſs, by which we contract an inſenſibility to enjoyments with which we are ſurrounded.

Such a perfection of language I grant is a mere chimera, never to be realized. The ſhortneſs of life, and the limits of our intellects will ever be an inſurmountable impediment. The words of ſuch a copious language cannot be repeated often enough to take root, and grow into cuſtom, and it is the words generally known by which opinions can be influenced; thoſe words for which the learned are obliged to conſult dictionaries, and which the ignorant do not in the leaſt underſtand, have no more effect, though taken from the national language, than if they were Latin words.

II. Fecund etymologies and expreſſions are ſuch as include many intereſting truths: but theſe expreſſions muſt not be over common: amidſt a too frequent uſe of them, their uſeful part would eſcape our attention.

It is needleſs to declare that there is no language of any ſuch perfection; they are all the work of imperfect men; and the Fables of the Jews, who are for making the Hebrew a language all divine, have been ſufficiently confuted by unexceptionable judges.

All the treaſures of knowledge yet to be met with, in any language have been brought into it by individuals; they are all owing either to ſerious invention, or the ſudden fruits of feſtivity and chance.

SUPPLEMENT I.

The academy, as I ſee by the extract which has been made of my diſſertation, could have wiſhed that I had begun my ſecond part by a general diſſertation, eſtabliſhing the preference of language to all other imaginable ways of communicating one's ideas, and examining the proportion between the degrees of genius, underſtanding, and knowledge of nations, on one hand, and on the other between the greater or leſſer richneſs of their different languages.

I would willingly repair this omiſſion did time permit, and did I not believe that I ſhould ſpare it for more important additions.

I do not, however, apprehend, that the reader will be any great loſer by the omiſſion: all that relates to general reaſonings, he will find in the books of thoſe philoſophers who treat of the ſymbolic part of our knowledge; and as to proofs of fact, this piece is not wanting in them.

They who were deaf at their birth, are deplorably ſtupid; whereas they who were born blind, often ſhew a capacity and penetration much above the common. This difference can proceed only from the uſe of ſpeech, which is wanting to the former, and which the latter enjoys. A ſtranger, on coming into a very populous city, is at firſt hard put to it to imprint on his imagination

gination and memory, the ſeveral countenances of the inhabitants; but whenever he comes to know their names, he eaſily remembers and diſtinguiſhes them; an evident proof how very much our thoughts are influenced by theſe ſymbols, whereas it is but very ſlowly that we come to diſtinguiſh ſimilar things, for which we know no name. The impreſſions of the ſenſes ſoon paſs away; it is only by means of the names annexed to them that the human mind recalls their fleeting images; and the mind ſeems naturally diſpoſed to aſſociate ideas to ſounds. He who can conceive abſtract ideas, without the help of ſigns, muſt be an extraordinary genius indeed, and it is beyond even his abilities, when theſe ideas are very complicated: of this tranſcendant geometry affords numberleſs proofs. I may one day enlarge on this ſubject, in treating of the origin of languages.

The compariſon of nations concerning the proportion of their knowledge to their language, beſides ſurpaſſing my abilities, would expoſe me to give great offence in the execution. I ſhall, however, take the liberty of mentioning the following obſervations.

A capacity of making ſuch compariſons requires that one be perfectly acquainted with the languages of thoſe nations, the intellects of which have hitherto made no great progreſs; but here it is that the difficulty lies. This cannot be referred to thoſe very nations, every one uſually ſiding with his mother tongue, and would make up its deficiency by extravagant praiſes. A foreigner, from whom more impartiality may be expected, is little diſpoſed to apply himſelf to a language which he does not foreſee will furniſh him with much uſeful knowledge; and a philoſopher learns only thoſe which have produced many excellent works. It being my intention thoroughly to digeſt the ſubject, recommended to me by the academy, it would give me infinite pleaſure to meet with accurate and impartial accounts of the degree of perfection, or imperfection of the languages of certain nations, whoſe genius and knowledge are ſtill very narrow: to name thoſe would be a breach in manners; but that there are ſuch languages in Europe, is unqueſtionable, eſpecially if we take into the account idioms, known only in the country, and among the commonality.

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The ſureſt method for determining the richneſs of languages is by tranſlations. Thoſe which are poor, will ſoon betray their indigence; if ſome work with variety of matter, and written in a rich language, be attempted to be rendered into them: the tranſlator will be reduced to have recourſe ſometimes to Latin terms, ſometimes to long paraphraſes, and will often mutilate a thought. This rule may, however, fail in the hands of a bad tranſlator, who either is not acquainted with the ſubject, or not verſed in his own language, or laſtly, has not that quickneſs and verſatility required for hitting and tranſlating all the ideas and terms of the original: in a word, if the tranſlators be ſuch as our German bookſellers generally employ.

The richneſs or poverty of a language can ſcarce be abſolutely determined. Languages are generally rich or poor, only with regard to certain objects; that which abounds with philoſophic expreſſions, may be very barren in all the appurtenances of ſhip-building and navigation: this would neceſſarily be the caſe of the Swiſſers, had they a peculiar national language. Several analogous inſtances will be met with in this treatiſe.

The moſt enlightened nations of Europe, the Germans, the French, the Engliſh, and the Italians, differ ſo little, either in the richneſs of their languages, or the ſtock of national knowledge, that the more and the leſs cannot be determined without great riſk of being miſtaken. Dimenſions which do not come within geometrical menſuration, cannot be compared, unleſs their difference be palpable. We will, therefore, allow the Engliſh, and that is the fartheſt we can go, that their language is the richeſt, and they themſelves, without breach of modeſty, aſſert that advantage; for beſides its being a mixture of three different languages, it not only is continually enriching itſelf with ſpoils from the Latin and French, but it farther allows of coining new words, and yet I am not without ſome doubts on the reality of their advantage. I never found it impoſſible, or even very difficult to tranſlate Engliſh pieces into German, or to concentrate the ſubſtance of them in extracts, abridging the thoughts, yet preſerving all their perſpicuity, and this without borrowing a ſingle foreign word. Neither do French tranſlators ſeem more at a loſs; but of this I

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am leſs qualified to judge, than of the language into which I myſelf have tranſlated Engliſh.

Laſtly, When literate nations are to be compared, we muſt carefully diſtinguiſh thoſe which produce a great number of ſcholars, or at leaſt nominal ſcholars, from thoſe where knowledge is more diffuſed among the bulk of the nation; I mean where the officers, country gentlemen, and farmers, &c. have a greater ſhare of taſte, and more knowledge than in other parts. This laſt circumſtance ever bears a greater proportion to the richneſs of a language than the former. A ſcholar by profeſſion, far from confining himſelf to his natural language, converſes with the Greek and the Latin, and the living languages: that, how bad and poor ſoever his own language may be, he attains the ſame degree of knowledge as the learned, whoſe mother tongues are of an univerſal richneſs, provided he makes up this diſadvantage by aſſiduous application. There may be great Botaniſts among a people, though they have but few terms belonging to the vegetable kingdom. This indeed is not impoſſible, but where the Botanic language is rich, our younger years receive a tincture of it, that in youth we the more eaſily acquire a regular knowledge of the ſcience.

SUPPLEMENT II.

Since my committing the above reflections to paper, I have been in company with a perſon, of all the world the moſt capable of furniſhing us with the neceſſary helps for eſtimating the proportion between the knowledge of the ſeveral nations and their reſpective languages, I mean Mr. Buttner, a profeſſor in the univerſity of Gottingen *(l)*. This learned

(l) There being at preſent two profeſſors of that name at Gottingen, both Botaniſts, and who have both viſited France, it may not be amiſs to inform the reader, that the perſon here intended is Mr. William Buttner, profeſſor extraordinary, a native of Wolfenbuttle, very well known to moſt of the French officers of diſtinction who were in garriſon here, or who paſſed through this city, being frequently viſited by them on account of his fine collection of natural curioſities.

gentleman

gentleman, whoſe knowledge is as profound as general, is about a Polyglot work, far ſurpaſſing that of Chamberlayne. In one column he couches the Latin terms, according to the order of the ſciences and arts; in the others, he places the words anſwerable to them, in the other languages. Thus, at one view exhibiting the comparative copiouſneſs and indigence of all thoſe languages, and farther diſtinguiſhing what is the original property of each, from its borrowed ſtores.

Two men of letters were likewiſe in company with us, one a native of Straſburg, who as ſuch may in ſome meaſure be looked on as both French and German; the other, a Frenchman, but very converſant with our language. Before this kind of tribunal of our own ſetting up, we brought the languages of the ſeveral nations, in order to an examination of their merits and defects.

We all unanimouſly agreed that the German is a very rich language, infinitely richer than the French.

On interrogating Mr. Buttner, our common friend, concerning ſome languages which we did not underſtand, the ſubſtance of his anſwers, and thoſe of his dictionary, which we conſulted at the ſame time was as follows:

The Hungarian language is very poor, and its terms of art it borrows from the Sclavonian.

The Ruſſian, the Poliſh, the Bohemian, the Vandalian, the Sclavonian, being but one and the ſame language, the Sclavonian dialect as ſpoken in Luſatia, is the very pooreſt of all thoſe idioms, and indeed it cannot be otherwiſe, being only the dialect of mean ruſtics, without ſo much as one ſingle book written in it. The Ruſſian language, on the contrary, is the richeſt, it abounds eſpecially in philoſophic terms, which I conjectured might have been introduced from the Greek languages, by the channel of theological controverſies, and Mr. Buttner found my conjecture verified by experience. One would at firſt be inclined to think that the Poliſh language ſhould be richer than the Ruſſian, yet it is otherwiſe; and if I am not miſtaken, one thing that keeps it thus poor, is the very frequent uſe of Latin in Poland.

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I aſked whether the Ruſſians had any mineralogic terms? the anſwer was, that they had none properly their own, and that they adopted the German terms. This I was not ſurprized at, as from us they learned to work mines. But my wonder is that our language ſhould be ſo very copious in all the concerns of mineralogy, as in Tacitus's time we had not looked into the bowels of the earth. The age of the Otho's ſtands happily ſignalized for having both diſcovered metals, and enriched the language: beſides it is not common that a people of itſelf invents names for new objects; they naturally borrow them from the nations which brought them acquainted with ſuch objects. I ſhould be very deſirous of knowing whether the Vandals and Sclavonians, ſettled in Germany and in Hungary, along both ſides of the Danube, a country full of mines, whether I ſay they have mineralogic terms of their own, or whether they borrowed thoſe of the Germans.

The Bohemian language, ſaid Mr. Buttner, is abſolutely void of ſea-terms, and the Ruſſians make uſe of ours. The reaſon of this is obvious.

But what was quite new and very unexpected, we found the Daniſh to be one of the pooreſt languages of any ſpoken in Europe, and particularly much poorer than the Swediſh, with which it has ſuch an affinity. If this be the real caſe, it ſeems an indiſputable proof that the richneſs of national knowledge is not always proportioned to the richneſs of the language, for that literature and ſcience have long ſince flouriſhed in Denmark, is what cannot be denied. The want of knowledge is not the only cauſe of the poverty of languages; there are others, and I think I have hit on them. The national language is impoveriſhed by the learned languages coming too much into vogue, eſpecially if the writers of that nation prefer them to their own. In Denmark there are, as it were, two learned languages; the Latin and the German; the latter is become ſo general there, that many Danes look on it as a ſecond mother tongue, that it is not at all ſurpriſing, the language of that country ſhould be ſo defective: under ſuch a contemptuous neglect, it muſt neceſſarily want many terms and expreſſions, and gradually loſe no ſmall part of its preſent ſtock, ſcanty as it is.

SECTION V.

Bad influences of a language on opinions.

LANGUAGES may do hurt ſeveral ways, which I reduce to ſix, 1ſt. By their poverty. 2d. By copiouſneſs. 3d. By equivocations. 4th. By acceſſory ideas and falſe judgments, inſeparable from the principal idea. 5th. By etymologies and expreſſions, pregnant with errors, or productive of miſtakes. 6th. By an overweening fondneſs for certain arbitrary beauties.

POVERTY.

We have ſeen above the inſtance of the Ethiopians, who having but one word for both *perſon* and for *nature*, could not comprehend the doctrine of the union of Chriſt's two natures in one ſingle perſon.

We have likewiſe ſeen that among the Greeks and Romans, the Deity had no peculiar identical name, and to this may probably be imputed the badneſs of their philoſophy, and their defectuous notions in every thing relating to theology. And this it was which made their moſt eminent geniuſes ſo fluctuating and uncertain concerning the queſtion, *Whether there are Gods.* Whereas among us it will not be eaſy to find a ſenſible man, even though an infidel in point of religion, who queſtions the exiſtence of the Deity. But the wretched reaſoning of the ancients on that important head, proceeded from this: they never formed the queſtion, *Is there a God?* by itſelf. They always added the following; *Are there angels? Are there Genii, whoſe power and wiſdom ſurpaſs the power and wiſdom of men?* This laſt queſtion was what philoſophy could not reſolve: wanting

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the light of revelation, it had nothing to adduce on this head beyond very weak proofs *a priori*, aud ſome accounts of pretended apparitions, which would not bear examining. It is therefore not at all ſtrange that they ſhould have fluctuated amidſt doubts, whilſt no body exhorted them, according to the form uſed in the Roman ſenate, to divide their opinion (*m*), and that Unitarians, or they who worſhipped only one God, were looked on as no Atheiſts. The very plural of the Latin word for God (*Dii*) which was ſo frequently in their mouth, hindered them from ſeparating two queſtions ſo very different: finite and contracted as their Deities were, a freſh confuſion led them to attribute indiſcriminately to the whole tribe of Deities, infinitude, ſupreme felicity, and omniſcience. Looking on theſe properties as inſeparable, from the notion of a God, whatever he might be (*n*); though a direct contradiction to the plurality of them, which took its riſe only from their not thinking one ſingle God ſufficient for the creation and government of the univerſe.

Here I recollect that ſome divines have cenſured all languages as deficient, not one being able to expreſs all the divine things without throwing us into confuſion. This I allow in things of which we have no ideas; or at leaſt only negative ideas; for inſtance, of infinitude, or concerning the manner in which omnipotence acts, without contact or pulſation, but by bare volition; and this both on mundane objects, and non-entity itſelf; or laſtly, of the preciſe cauſe of the neceſſity of his exiſtence. The having in one's ſelf the foundation of one's eſſence, is to be ſure an incomprehenſible expreſſion; but inſtead of charging it on the poverty of languages, it is that of our mind, which is to be lamented. Is it not quite unreaſonable to expect that human languages ſhall expreſs what the human mind cannot conceive? One might indeed, in imitation of the Algebraiſts, who denote the unknown qualities of which they are ſeeking the worth, by *X Y Z*, one might, I ſay, to denote divine things, make uſe of every ſound which hitherto has no ſenſe annexed to it,

(*m*) Divide ſententiam.

(*n*) Cicero de natura Deorum. lib. 1. ſect. 27, 28.

but where would be the advantage of this? Should we be better acquainted with the objects indicated by these sounds. But this, however, is not properly what is complained of: it were to be wished, say they, that languages had expressions less harsh, and more exact for expressing certain truths, for instance these: *God has not a right to break his promises. He has not a right to predestinate us, absolutely and unconditionally to an eternal misery, as this would efface the kindness of creation, and render nihility preferable to existence. God cannot sin nor lie, nor realize contradictions.* It is, these modes of expressions that offend; for God, say they, can do every thing, and it would be absurd to deny him any right or prerogative. I have lately, a second time, met with these complaints in the work of a very judicious writer, where I should not have expected them(*n*), but it is only from a zeal wanting knowledge that they proceed: these expressions are not at all harsh, and what they give to understand is the very truth.

The instance of Botany has in the preceding section shewn us what a detriment the poverty of language is to natural history. This is a defect not to be remedied either by scientific names, taken from the language of the learned, nor by definitions. 1. These definitions and these names differ still more from one another than the country names. Every literator has a right of changing them at his pleasure, and to secure this precious right, never fails making use of it as often as he can. 2. These names are known only to those who make natural history their business, and thus like the hieroglyphical figures of the Egyptians, they serve only to conceal the most useful discoveries from the knowledge of all the rest of mankind. How should the peasant, the shepherd, the miner, the traveller distinguish, and much less make observations on objects, of which they know not the names? 3. What few observations nature will, as I may say, oblige them to make, are lost to the academic naturalist, they not being able to explain them to him in his idiom. 4. Foreign

(*n*) *Observ. Miscell. in Librum, Job*, page 317, 318. Ed. d' Amst. 1758. The journalists have justly praised the philosophic cast which distinguishes this composition.

reign words and technical terms not being current in common life, are the more difficult to retain, and the ſtudy of them the more irkſome. 5. They are excluded from poetry, which is no ſmall diſadvantage. It is through poetry that natural hiſtory gains admittance into the cloſets of thoſe who do not trouble themſelves about going after it in the fields, or in the abyſſes of the earth. When a picture has charmed us in poetry, we are curious to ſee the original, and on ſeeing it, memory faithfully retains the impreſſion.

COPIOUSNESS.

Copiouſneſs ſeldom proves hurtful, but when for want of being proportionally diſtributed, it happens to be joined with a ſcarcity in the ſame kind of expreſſions. Suppoſe, for inſtance, that two different names are given to two vegetables, which, from their very near reſemblance ſhould, according to the analogy of the language, have but one; or that two are given to two ſpecies of the ſame kind, which every where elſe are diſtinguiſhed only by the addition of an adjective to the generical name, or by compoſition (*p*). What is the conſequence? The people will imagine theſe two vegetables to be abſolutely different, and will never apprehend that they can produce the ſame effects, and anſwer the ſame ends. Perhaps, and then the miſtake will be ſtill the more groſs, they will make two kinds of them; but this would be an error, owing to etymology.

The affluence of ſynonimes ſwells vocabularies; but provided that theſe ſynonimes be every where underſtood, it is ſo far from being a detriment to languages, that it rather embelliſhes them by variety of expreſſions. Synonimes do no hurt but when ſcattered in different provinces; as then by this unhappy copiouſneſs the ſame people do not under-

(*p*) As in Germany, adding an adjective, we ſay, *Weiſſe Tanne*, and otherwiſe by compoſition; *Edel-Tanne*, which is a kind of pine. Tanne alone, properly, ſignifying a fir-tree.

ſtand

ſtand one another, any more than if they ſpoke two different languages; natural hiſtory eſpecially ſuffers by it. But it is much worſe when two ſynonimes go current at once in two provinces, under different ſignifications. Such, I am told, is the caſe of the German words which denote the fir and pine-tree (*q*). The only remedy is to make one of theſe two names claſſical, and this honour ſhould be conferred on the province producin g ſome great Naturaliſts who, at the ſame time, muſt be a writer of ſuch weight, as to give currency to a word. To oppoſe this would be a very miſtaken zeal for one's province; the love of one's common country, and that of the ſciences is to preponderate. Beſides, all oppoſitions muſt ſoon fall before his authority. Claſſical authors are the conquerors of the empire of languages be their cauſe right or wrong, they always carry the day.

When the other provincial names can be applied to lower ſpecies, which till then had gone without a name, a copiouſneſs, ſo hurtful in itſelf, becomes turned to a uſe ſtill more happy and beneficial.

EQUIVOCATION.

All homonymies are not equivocations, and conſequently not to be condemned indiſcriminately. Homonomy often does good ſervice to languages. It helps the memory, it pleaſes the imagination, which delights in reſemblances, and it relieves the underſtanding, whereas jejune writers, and others, ſervilely adhering to the propriety of the meaning, diſguſt the reader. Proſcribing it would ſignify nothing; our fondneſs for the figurative ſtile would be continually bringing it into vogue. When between objects of the ſame name, there is no inconſiderable difference, and this difference is ſufficiently pointed out in the connection of the diſcourſe, ſo as not to be confounded, no equivocation need be apprehended. When the Latins met with the word *Lupus* in a paſſage relating to carrying off ſheep; it is not to be thought that they could imagine the ſheep had

(*q*) *Fichte* and *Tanne*.

been

been carried off by a pike, and in as little danger are we of confounding the celeſtial bear with the terreſtrial animal, from which the former derives its name. When the name of God is given to ſuperior intelligences, their inviſibility, their grandeur, and the awe they inſpire, make them appear not a little different from any thing we are acquainted with, and give them ſuch a reſemblance with the Deity as may lead us into monſtrous errors; whereas we never ſhall be ſo far miſled by the poets beſtowing this title on worldly monarchs, knowing them to be of the ſame nature with ourſelves. All are agreed in the eſſential difference to be made between the proper ſenſe of a word, and its figurative, ſublime, and poetical import.

It is therefore a capital rule that *homonymy is dangerous only when different objects denoted by the ſame name have ſo near a reſemblance, or are ſo intimately connected, as to be eaſily miſtaken for one another.*

But nature has taken care that this ſhall not be the caſe too frequently, by giving us a predilection for thoſe bold figures in which the expreſſions are ſo remote from their common meaning, that it is impoſſible we ſhould be miſtaken. The metonymy of *ſpecies* for the genus, by which we might be moſt eaſily miſled, is accordingly the moſt rare. This wiſe ſcope of nature would be utterly defeated, if, according to the notions of ſome lexicographers, and eſpecially of the Hebrew; languages were ſo conſtituted, that the principal ſignification ſhould point to the genus alone, and the others indicate only the ſpecies (*r*); for is there any thing which we are more apt to confound than the genus and ſpecies? This article of ambiguity I ſhall illuſtrate both by fictions and real facts.

Suppoſe that to two diſtempers eſſentially different, the ſame name has been given, on account of ſome external ſymptoms, common to both; the empyrics, and ſome phyſicians, no better than they, will treat them in the ſame manner, and thus inſtead of a remedy, we ſhall take poiſon (*s*).

(*r*) This miſtake I have confuted in the work already quoted, *Reflections on the Methods now uſed for underſtanding the ancient Hebrew language.*

(*s*) This misfortune, far from being imaginary, has really happened more than once, when, whether accidentally or fraudulently, the ſame name has been given to remedies and poiſons. Of this ſeveral inſtances occur in *Hill's Uſefulneſs of a Knowledge of Plauts.*

Spat

Spat and Quartz are very eaſily diſtinguiſhable, but the miners in many places have only the firſt name for both; and to this it is owing that they take theſe two minerals, which every day preſent themſelves to their eyes, for one and the ſame, (though they abſolutely have nothing at all common, unleſs the tranſparency of a certain kind of ſpat be reckoned ſuch) and they themſelves are no farther acquainted with the inferior ſpecies, than as facilitating or hindering the fuſion of minerals.

Baron Wolf pretended to demonſtrate the *principle of ſufficient reaſon*, by ſaying, that did any thing exiſt without ſufficient reaſon, it would follow that nihility muſt be its ſufficient reaſon. M. de Premontval, member of that claſs of the academy, for which I particularly intend my work, has in laying open the inſufficiency of this demonſtration, clearly ſhewn that it was founded only on the ambiguity of the word *nothing*, or *nonentity* (*t*).

The ancients have very much diſputed on the ſupreme or ultimate good. It was indeed the moſt important queſtion of their morality. We have ſeen what they meant by this *end of goods*, that is, a ſcope, to which all other goods are only conducive means, being goods no farther than as leading to that end. Thus wealth is of itſelf no good. It only becomes ſo, as enabling us to procure agreeable ſenſations to ourſelves, and ſecuring us from the ſufferings of indigence, and an anxious ſolicitude for futurity. By *ſupreme good*, is therefore to be underſtood that identical good, the attainment of which is the capital object of my endeavours, making

French Tranſlator's Remark.

(*t*) It is proper even to take notice that M. de Premontval having ſhewn that the falſity of the demonſtration becomes manifeſt, on thinking, or on tranſlating into French, whereas in the Latin and German expreſſion, it remains ſtrangely enveloped and intricate; and this it was which gave riſe to the important queſtion, on the influence of language on opinions, and of opinions on language. Never had the bulk of the German nation been miſled by the Wolfian philoſophy, had not the two languages, which are moſt familiar to them, the German and Latin, been more accomodated than the French, to the ſophiſm, on which the whole is founded. This, perhaps, is one of the moſt remarkable paſſages in the hiſtory of the human mind.

uſe

uſe of the other goods, only as ſo many ſteps towards the attainment of it, and which without ſuch intentions might be claſſed among things indifferent. It is not neceſſary that this be the greateſt of all goods; whether great or ſmall, it ſuffices that it is the object of my deſires. But the Latin expreſſion was ambiguous. *Summum bonum* may equally ſignify the greateſt poſſible good; and the expreſſion *ſupreme good*, in our modern languages, ſcarce admits of any other ſenſe.

This ambiguity miſled ſeveral philoſophers, who not to ſtand neuter in diſcuſſions which had ſo much perplexed their predeceſſors, ſtarted that frivolous queſtion, in what conſiſts the *Supreme Good?* That is, in their opinion, the greateſt of all goods. I call this queſtion frivolous. Is it not poſſible, may not two or ſeveral goods be equal, and in this caſe who can warrant that there is one greater than all the other? Farther, may not a leſſer good in a higher degree be equal to a greater good in a leſſer degree, that we may be at a loſs which to prefer? Is there then a geometry for goods and evils, and how are we to meaſure things, of which we know no common meaſure? But we will ſuppoſe that by the principle of *indiſcernibles*, it was either impoſſible, or very improbable, that two beings ſhall reach the ſame point of felicity. The conſequence will be, that there is but one only being which can enjoy the ſupreme good, and then all other goods are out of the queſtion. This good was thought to be within every body's reach and conception, but can it ever be demonſtrated that it is ſo? The ſupreme good, in reality, conſiſts in being God; and to this, we neither can, nor are to pretend: ſeveral chriſtian moraliſts, enamoured with the theological air of Plato's ſentiments, haſtily adopted them, but on a change of the queſtion, they warped thoſe doctrines from the meaning which that philoſopher had annexed to them. They placed the ſupreme good in union with God: ſtrange miſtake! this moral union is not an individual good, it is a mean for acquiring a great quantity of goods to be eternally enjoyed, for attaining a felicity of interminable permanency, compoſed of numberleſs and infinitely diverſified pleaſures. It is not therefore what the queſtion turns on, and much leſs is it what the ancient philoſophers wrangled about. The ſubject of

 their

their altercations was, in effect, no more than to decide why, for inſtance, a palatable diſh, a fine proſpect, riches, &c. are things which pleaſe us. Would it not be abſurd to ſay, that thoſe things pleaſe us, becauſe they procure us union with God? Should we like wine, becauſe it unites us with the Deity? Were this union the ultimate ſcope to which all goods tend, the gratifications before mentioned, muſt be ſtricken out of the liſt of goods, and be ſet aſide among things indifferent.

An expreſſion of a later date, the ambiguity of which has not cauſed leſs debate and confuſion, is that of the *Law of Nature (u)*. The learned and eſpecially ſuch as were not Civilians, framing to themſelves a law of nature, which, in the main, was nothing but morality, have thereby deprived themſelves of a whole ſcience. Beſides, morality, which by the divine ſanction is changed into the *Law of Nature*, we clearly conceive a diſtinct ſcience, determining the rights which we reciprocally have over one another. Rights, which are valid, abſtractedly from acknowledging the exiſtence of a God, or without conſidering him as legiſlator. This ſcience, on any difference ariſing between nation and nation, becomes indiſpenſible; as theſe differences cannot be brought to an iſſue neither by morality nor the civil law; for what right have I to compel another to become virtuous, or to make war on a criminal people? Is it for me to chaſtiſe them for their profligate diſregard of duties? Grotius is the eſteemable perſon to whom we owe the firſt diſcovery of this ſcience; but it ſoon was in danger of being again confounded with morality. The Latin word for *right* is ambiguous, ſignifying likewiſe *law*. Thus, for inſtance, we ſay the Roman right: and in this ſenſe it is that moſt divines confound right of nature with law of nature, that is, with morality, which is become a law by its connection with natural divinity, and they fly into a flame at hearing it ſaid of ſome ſins, that they are not contrary to the right of nature. This is what has partly given riſe to the diſputes in Germany, concerning M. Schmaus's *Right of Nature*. Though I by no means adopt all that learned perſon's principles, nor even

(u) Juſnaturæ.

would

would ſo much as vindicate the purity of his intentions, in certain Theſes which apparently ſap the very fundamentals of all morality; yet I am inclined to think that the outcry againſt that in which he denies the antiphyſical ſin to be repugnant to natural right, would not have been ſo loud had this right been better underſtood, for who will maintain that this ſin warrants making war on a nation where it ſhould prevail?

All theſe vehement diſputes might have been prevented by a leſs equivocal term; but where is it to be found? That of *natural fitneſs* might be propoſed (*x*), but whether the German expreſſion anſwering to it would be approved, is a queſtion.

I have ſaid that the kind of homon; my including the genus and ſpecies under the ſame denomination had its dangers. This is the very caſe of a German word, equally ſignifying wonders and miracles. We give the name of *wonder* to all great events, all ſingular and unexcepted events which excite ſurprize and admiration (*y*); and herein cuſtom happens to agree with etymology, but this appellation is more particularly appropriated to the immediate operations of divine omnipotence; it denotes miracles κατ' ἐξοχήν. This twofold meaning has led many divines to multiply miracles for God's greater glory, as they imagine, and to affirm that miracles are ſtill performed in the kingdom of grace, though not perceived or taken notice of.

Inſtead of troubling the academy with the particulars of a controverſy now actually on foot, I ſhall only ſay, that many of our old divines, who are quoted as authorities for the continuance of miracles, might in their uſe of that word underſtand it only in the ſenſe annexed to it by Luther, when ſpeaking of the works of nature, and eſpecially of the rainbow, which in Latin anſwers to *Admirabilia Dei Opera, the wonderful works of God.*

(*x*) It is thus we render the German word *Befugniſſe* (jus ad Rem faciendam vel exigendam) though *fitneſs* be not preciſely anſwerable to it, but the reader will by the context perceive how it is to be underſtood.

(*y*) Which in Latin may be termed *mirabilia.*

The vehement diſputes among the Jews about the love of our neighbour are known to every body, and this diſpute appeared to Jeſus Chriſt of ſuch concern, that he himſelf was pleaſed to illuſtrate and decide it: yet, in the main, it turned only on the ambiguity or double meaning of a Hebrew word (*z*), and this word primarily ſignifies any man with whom I have ſomething to tranſact, my neighbour, nay, my adverſary, either in a law-ſuit or a duel; next it likewiſe ſignifies *a friend*. Theſe diviſions would never have been heard of had Moſes written in German, and made uſe of that language in ſaying; *thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf* (*a*).

Acceſſary Ideas and Judgments.

Many are the objects for which ſome languages have no neutral terms, and which cannot be named without either praiſing or blaming them. Now if theſe acceſſary ideas are improper or erroneous, the judgment of the nations ſpeaking thoſe languages, will hardly eſcape being infected by thoſe improprieties.

The meaning of the word *luxury* in French is very well known to all who underſtand that language. It is a word which neither prepoſſeſſes in favour of, or prejudices againſt the object denoted by it. Luxury, under certain limitations, is what ſound policy will both approve and countenance, as without it no ſtate can proſper and flouriſh. I would venture to undertake a juſtification of it, and bring many of my proofs from the holy ſcripture itſelf. But the German name for it is the queſtion: that made uſe of by M. Juſti (*b*), is already charged with an acceſſary idea, which will neceſſarily expoſe it to the contempt and deteſtation of profeſſors of morality, and eſpecially eccleſiaſtics, or at leaſt will withhold them from giving the due commendations to that diſcrete and al-

(*z*) רע.

(*a*) Neighbour may be rendered in German by *neben-menſche*, as it were, *fellow-man*.

(*b*) Ueppigkeit, which may be rendered voluptuouſneſs, or *libertiniſm*.

lowable

lowable luxury which I am ſpeaking of. We have another word, which literally ſignifies ſuperfluity *(c)*; and it is certain, the better only wants to be ſufficiently received in this new ſignification. It is then ſtrange that a thing for which we are yet without any neutral term, ſhould be ſo exclaimed againſt, not only by preachers, but likewiſe by thoſe who ſet up for oeconomiſts? And is not the language partly the cauſe of the ignorance of thoſe people, who think they are wonderfully promoting the public good, in preaching up or recommending the moſt ſordid parſimony.

Acceſſary ideas come eſpecially under the notice of tranſlators, by the difficulty of finding equivalent expreſſions in their language, whether they are to be accompanied with the ſame acceſſary ideas, or whether perfectly indifferent. Good tranſlators often venture to amend this deficiency of the language by annexing to words new ſignifications, with which the reader gradually becomes familiarized. The tranſlation indeed may at firſt appear dark and looſe. This is an inconveniency unavoidable, through the deficiency of the language, but it is compenſated by a greater advantage.

I ſhould ſcarce be excuſeable, were I to omit the words, *time* and *ſpace*, though I find nothing exceptionable in them. Whole ſchools of philoſophers are known to look on time and ſpace, only as *ſeries* of monades mutations or phænomena, and admit no void either in one or the other; and theſe philoſophers charge the language with miſleading the imagination in this reſpect, by repreſenting to it time and ſpace, abſtractedly from every other thing, and as eſſences ſubſiſting of themſelves. I do not well know what languages fall under this charge, and having not yet obſerved that any one is excepted, the cenſure perhaps may include them all. Let us take a ſhort view of the German, the French, and the Latin.

I own that I do not ſee wherein either of thoſe languages influences our judgments, or miſleads our imagination. They do not ſo much as border on the queſtion. They do not introduce the leaſt acceſſary idea in the notions of *time* and *ſpace*. Would ſuch critics have theſe words, to draw

(*c*) Ueberfluſs.

after

after them by way of regimen, a genitive ſpecifying the things of which time and ſpace are the comatentiona or ſeries? But that would be very ſuperfluous, allowing even the truth of the theſis maintained by thoſe philoſophers. Every one knows there can be no order without things, and yet the word *order* may, in all languages, be uſed alone, and without regimen. Do they think that the very etymology of the terms ſhould indicate time and ſpace to be nothing more than ſucceſſions or ſeries? But this is the very thing in queſtion; and did the language decide in their favour, the philoſophers of a contrary opinion, might juſtly accuſe it of partiality. Is it not ſomething out of the way to blame it for not favouring either one or the other party? And is it not ſtill more out of the way to require from it, or rather to reqùire from the people which forms it, and theſe are the multitude, generally illiterate, the deciſion of one of the moſt abſtract queſtions in all philoſophy? If the geometrician be allowed to denote the line of which he is ſeeking the length by an arbitrary character, not in the leaſt expreſſive of any of the properties of that line; may not we likewiſe make uſe of the expreſſions of a language, the etymology of which does not intimate to us any thing of the nature of the objects repreſented by thoſe expreſſions, or through time is become totally loſt. The roots of the firſt language muſt certainly have been arbitrary ſigns; for from whence could they have been derived? And with what reaſon can it be required that all the words of the modern languages ſhould be real definitions and pictures of the objects?

Language, to be ſure, accuſtoms us to abſtract time and ſpace from the things which fill them, and that it ſhould be otherwiſe is impoſſible: without abſtract ideas, what would become of metaphyſics? But if, farther, we can ſo readily repreſent to ourſelves as void, time and ſpace; this does not proceed from the language, but from the thing itſelf. Where is the impoſſibility of a hollow ſphere exiſting, abſolutely filled with nothing; by ſuppoſing that there is no other univerſe, nor any thing without this ſphere to compreſs it? What contradiction is there in this idea, that omnipotence could have created only this ſphere, inſtead of the world which it has made? But if the exiſtence of ſuch a ſphere be poſſible, that of a void ſpace is likewiſe ſo; the internal capacity of this ſphere being

being in reality an abſolute void. This cannot be denied without denying this capacity any magnitude and extenſion, and thus the diameter and circumference would no longer have that reciprocal proportion, which the eternal laws of geometry require. Who will affirm that omnipotence cannot create a portion of inſulated matter, ſeparated from all other matter, and give it the form of a carpenter's ſquare? And is it not evident by the determinate length of the hypothenuſe, that there muſt be a void ſpace between the two extremities of that ſquare?

If our ready conception of a void ſpace be owing to an error, this is not to be ſought for in the language, but in our ſenſes, to which, before we become acquainted with and have combined certain experiments, the whole expanſe of the atmoſphere appears a void ſpace.

On the other hand, they who place eternity in a ſucceſſion of inſtants, who conceive of it not as a mathematical point, but as an infinite line; theſe, I ſay, might with greater reaſon complain of the partiality of our language. According to them, eternity is only an infinite time, which we conceive by taking away from the time in which we exiſt, its beginning and end, and in this reſpect I am very much of their mind. Now the oppoſition in our language between time and eternity, in ſome meaſure contradicts this opinion, and favours ſchool divinity, which excludes from eternity all ſucceſſion, looking on it as an immenſe point, as a perpetual inſtant, and the whole of it preſent at once. I muſt, however, alledge in favour of the language, that in diſtinguiſhing time from eternity, nothing farther is meant by time than the continuance of life, or the duration of the world; and the expreſſions of *infinite time* (*d*), or *eternal time*, ſo far from being foreign to the idiom of our language, are perfectly ſuitable to it. The Latin word anſwering to eternity is *æternitas*, which is a contraction of *æviternitas*, of which *ævum* time, makes a part. Laſtly, does not the church call eternity *ſecula ſeculorum*, *ages of ages?*

(*d*) *Oevum infinitum.*

Etymology and Expreſſions.

The inventors of new expreſſions being no more infallible than the people who adopt them, the etymology of words, and compoſed phraſes may as well perpetuate an error as a truth, and this error faſtening on our mind in our tender years, will be the more contagious.

We all ſee the dew lodged on the plants, but as we do not ſee how it comes there, it would be quite as natural to compare it to perſpiration as to rain, and opinions would at leaſt be divided were not the latter opinion ſupported by long prejudice. The generality of people, and even the learned, who are not verſed in natural hiſtory, both alike look on dew as vapours formed into drops falling from the ſky. This however is a miſtake which may eaſily be cleared up, only by putting a receiver over the graſs in a dewy night *(e)*.

What ſurpriſed me here is not that men have been miſtaken; error is the lot of human nature; but it is the univerſality of this miſtake, and the obſtinate adherence to it, even after the truth of the matter has been ſo manifeſtly diſcovered, that every one may convince himſelf of it with his own eyes. How comes it that there is but one opinion on this ſubject, among all thoſe who make no experiment and are unacquainted with phyſics, and this happens to be the wrong opinion? It is not our ſenſes which deceive us, we ſee drops, but there are drops of ſweat as well as drops of rain. They who are abroad in the country all night, which is more often the caſe of the inferior claſs than men of letters, never per-

(*e*) An objection of a friend of mine makes it neceſſary to explain myſelf more fully; I am far from denying that fogs iſſuing from the earth do not leave drops on the trees through which they paſs; all I affirm is, that theſe drops do not deſcend but riſe from the earth and the plants; that the outſide of the receiver being a little wetted, is owing to thoſe fogs. That dew aſcends inſtead of deſcending is ſufficiently evinced by the plants which had been covered being as wet, and even more ſo, than thoſe which remained in the open air: a ſtill ſtronger confirmation of it is, that they are no ſooner uncovered than part of their dew flies off as a miſt.

ceive

ceive any thing of this ſuppoſed rain. Was there any thing more natural than to attribute to the drops on vegetables the ſame origin as to thoſe which proceed from our body? This humidity, when on glaſſes and on ſtones, was erroneouſly attributed to tranſpiration, and when the ſtatues of the gods happened to be thus humectated, ſuperſtition cried out a portent! a prodigy! How came this moiſture to be accounted an exudation where there was none, and no ſuch thing to be thought of where it really is? I mean in the vegetables, the nature of which is much nearer a kin to us than that of glaſſes and ſtones. About day-break, when the dew, after having been very copious, is evaporating, countrymen and ſhepherds ſee fogs riſing and not falling. The German name for theſe miſts ſhews their relation to dew *(f)*, and thus dew ſhould rather be looked on as a gift from the earth than from the ſky.

That this error has ſpread ſo very much is the fault of the languages in which it was at firſt introduced. We have heard from our childhood *the dew of heaven*, *the dew falls*, as we have heard ſay, *the ſtone*, *the wall*, *the window gives*: Now it will be no eaſy matter to repreſent to ourſelves as aſcending what we have all our life been uſed to conſider as falling, eſpecially if we have made no enquiries on this head. I have ever found divines pertinacious in defending this miſtake, and only becauſe they meet with theſe expreſſions in ſcripture; that is enough for them, juſt as if the Hebrew people had never ſpoke a word but what was inſpired, or as if the prophets writing in that language, had not been obliged to make uſe of popular expreſſions, they ſeem not aware that our naturaliſts, though they know better, retain thoſe expreſſions to avoid the imputation of pedantry.

Here follows an inſtance, preciſely of the ſame claſs. Manna bears a very near reſemblance to dew; its origin is the very ſame; the only difference being that it remains, whereas dew evaporates. From this reaſon it is that in the countries, where manna is found, they have imagined that like dew, it fell from above, and this conceit has got footing in the languages. Both the Arabs and Hebrews ſay with us, *that it comes from above*, or that it falls *(g)*. There is another kind which the Arabs, by way of

(f) *Thauwolken*, dew-clouds.

(g) ירד.

diſtinction, term *celeſtial manna (h)*. In the holy ſcripture we read that the manna fell along with the dew, and by the ſame figure which the profane poets make uſe of in calling the latter a gift of heaven, the truly inſpired poet has called the manna *bread from heaven (i)*. Theſe expreſſions, to which the orientals were accuſtomed from their early years, have confirmed them in the opinion that manna deſcended. It was not till the middle of the ſixteenth century that the falſity of that opinion began to be ſeen into, and that in Italy manna was found to be no more than a gum exuding from plants, trees and buſhes, on being pierced by certain inſects. The expreſſion, however, has been retained in the language, like thoſe relating to dew and to the riſing and ſetting of the ſun, which I have before ſpoken of; it likewiſe occurs in Italian books, written long ſince the miſtake was diſcovered *(k)*, and this ſhews that Moſes might make uſe of the expreſſion to the Iſraelites without countenancing the error to which the riſe of it was owing. From the currency of the expreſſion it is that this error ſtill ſubſiſts among thoſe who are not acquainted with the *materia medica*, that is among the generality; and as to the manna ſent to the Iſraelites, though Moſes's deſcription exactly agrees with our modern manna, there are few divines who will ſuffer themſelves to be undeceived.

The Jews in Jeſus's time went ſtill farther, making this error a handle to diſparage the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. *They ſaid unto him, what ſign ſheweſt thou that we may ſee and believe thee? What doeſt thou produce? Our fathers did eat manna in the deſert, as it is written he gave them bread from heaven to eat (l)*. Nothing is more true in phyſics than the Saviour's anſwer, *Verily, verily, I ſay unto you that the bread which Moſes gave you came not from heaven.* Now could, or would Chriſt have denied it, were the Hebrew phraſe to be underſtood in its literal ſenſe?

Theſe wrong uſes of the word *falling* put me in mind of thoſe which *riſing* occaſions in occurrences of univerſal concern, and into which con-

(h) مَنّ السماء.

(i) Pſ. LXVIII. 24.

(k) Guida di foreſtieri dell Abatte Pompeo Sarrelli. Napoli. 1761. p. 594, dalle frondi ſi raccogli manna, che di notte dal celo ſi diſtilla come la rugiada (i. e.) from the leaves is gathered manna, which like dew, falls in the night from the ſky.

(l) John vi. 30. 31.

ſequently

ſequently more enquiry and reflection might be expected. On the coining of bad money, for which, by a figure the Greeks themſelves were unacquainted with, the names of crowns, groſſchens, &c. are retained, it is evident that good money ſhould be worth more of thoſe kinds of crowns and groſſchens, that is, it ſhould be worth an agio or the difference of the ſtandard.

It ſhould then be ſaid, ſuch a coin, that of Bernburg for inſtance, *lowers in value*, the crown falls, it is worth leſs than before, and in the common courſe of things, it would uſually be true to ſay that good money lowers with the bad, for if, by an allowance of 10 per cent, I receive for twenty piſtoles, which make a hundred crowns, if I ſay I receive a hundred and ten crowns in bad money, the non value or deficiency of which is 50 per cent, it is very clear that the value of a piſtole is extremely lowered to my detriment, as for a hundred crowns in gold I receive of fine ſilver, only the value of fifty-five crowns, and this from the ſtupidity of the people in looking no farther than the piece and inſcription.

Whereas the piſtole, the louis d'or, the good florin, &c. are ſaid to riſe, and except thoſe who have philoſophically inveſtigated the ſubſtances of coins, or who have read what has been written about them within theſe ten years, and great traders, every body is miſled by thoſe expreſſions. They imagine a real augmentation or value when that is far from being the caſe. After laying out their capital in good coin, they fancy that the more monies lower, the better for them; and yet when bad money is again reduced to its real value, and the good is worth a difference of cent per cent, &c. which is the moſt favourable caſe, they are at moſt but where they were, they have preſerved their capital, and that's all.

Nay, there are ſome who, after being ſo inconſiderate as to exchange a hundred in gold for fifty-five in ſilver, think they have been mighty cunning, and hug themſelves for their addreſs in the improvement of money. I have diſcuſſed this matter with perſons of learning, and the difficulty in convincing them of ſo manifeſt a truth, ſhewed me how far this detrimental influence may go. When they were on yielding to the ſtrength of my arguments, they were always withheld by a ſuſpicion that

perhaps it was only a mere verbal controverſy, and whether, after all, to ſay, that the bad money lowers, or to ſay, that the good riſes in value, was not tantamount. The objection, indeed, was ſpecious, if the word *riſing* is taken only relatively to bad coins, the upſhot is the ſame, with only this difference, that for the juſtneſs of the relation, and to preclude any miſtake, good coin ſhould then be worth an agio of 50 per 100, and above. But it was underſtood in an abſolute ſenſe, and the good coins were looked on as an augmentation of wealth, and as an equivalent for a greater quantity of goods! A very great miſtake!

If in an affair which may be ſtrictly calculated, and which even, without calculation, ſeems as clear as the meridian ſun; an affair, beſides, of ſuch public concern, I ſay, if in an affair of ſuch a nature, the bulk of mankind are dazzled by an expreſſion, which yet is not abſolutely faulty; what will it be in abſtract and metaphyſical controverſies, and what precautions are not required againſt the errors into which the impropriety of language may draw us? We are not, however, without preſervatives againſt its ſnares; we may keep clear of them, both by doubt, which is the firſt precept of philoſophy, and by frequently varying our modes of ſpeaking. Away with that dry method, that ſuperſtitious adherence to the ſame expreſſions; it is infinitely more illuſory and deceitful than that amiable philoſophy, of which Plato has left us ſo charming a model, and which enlivens the moſt abſtruſe matters with the amenities of ſtyle, and the graces of poetry.

Etymology becomes a ſource of errors, not only when it is itſelf the offſpring of error, but likewiſe when it cauſes figurative expreſſions to be taken for real definitions; or when, by length of time, expreſſions become ſo far changed as to convey a falſe etymology to the ear. This caſe indeed happens but ſeldom, and concerns only foreign words and phraſes. When in fair weather a hovering cloud gradually extends itſelf over a certain hill in Switzerland, and this it ſeems is far from being uncommon, the hill looks as if it had a hat on; now this appearance gave riſe to the name of *Mons Pileatus*, which afterwards was corruptively changed into *Mont de Pilate*, or *Pilate*'s *Hill*; and that this falſe appellation might not want

want an origin, the fable was invented of Pontius Pilate's throwing himſelf into a lake on ſuch a mountain (*m*).

The other caſe is more frequent; it is incredible what a proneneſs there is in us to account whatever propoſitions we imagine to have diſcovered in etymology, infallible truths, as if the people, for it is they who make languages, could never be miſtaken. It is very wrongfully, that only grammarians are accuſed of this fondneſs for etymology; there are many others not leſs infected with it, and full as ready to take for a proof a word of which they do not ſo much as know the inventor, and often will beat their brains to forge a ſpecious proof, purely for upholding the authority of the word.

No two things are more alike than ice and chryſtal, eſpecially when ſplit, and on this account it is, that in many countries the name of ice has been given to the latter. This, for inſtance was the primary meaning of the Greek word κρύσταλλος; and from this community of appellation, ſome have been for explaining the origin of chryſtal: the moſt current opinion among the antients, was that chryſtal is an ice which time has indurated, giving to its parts a fixedneſs and coheſion, by which they have totally loſt their fluidity. I do not ſee how the ſight could occaſion this miſtake, as, were it ſo, the like judgment muſt have been formed of *quartz*, of the tranſparent kind of *ſpath*, of the *ſelenites*, in a word, of all the diaphanous productions of nature. Etymology, therefore, may be reaſonably apprehended to have cauſed the miſtake, and indeed it is moſt frequently met with among the ancients, who laid a wonderful ſtreſs on Greek etymologies; and if ſome moderns are dazzled by them, I have obſerved that it is principally among the admirers of the Greek. Accordingly, it is only ſuch, and not naturaliſts, that I ſhall briefly endeavour to convince of their miſtake.

I. Chryſtal is manifeſtly nothing but a kind of *quartz*, were it an indurated ice, the like muſt be ſaid of all the other ſpecies of quartz, but ſuch an abſurdity, I believe, will ſcarce be maintained by any one, who

(*m*) For a full Deſcription of Pilate's Hill, ſee the Hanover *Economical Chronicle*, 1758.

knows

knows that great quantities of quartz are found in places where ſcarce any ice is to be expected, as in branches of mines, the air of which is always temperate, and muſt have been more inclinable to warmth, before the external air could make its way thither.

II. Chryſtal is diſtinguiſhed by a determinate form, that of an hexagonal obeliſk; a figure never found in pendant iſicles; theſe are rather roundiſh, without either point or angles, and too irregular to be any thing but accidental, and in which the coaleſcence of drops of water coming thither in divers directions is obvious to the ſight.

The German name of the Oolithos *(n)* equally tends to miſlead us. I very much queſtion whether the firſt inventor of that name took the ſtone for petrified roes of fiſh, and gave into an error ſo contrary to the nature of petrifactions, and diſproved by chymical experiments. It was unqueſtionably the outward reſemblance, which induced him, as it has induced many others to call ſhells from certain works of art, or of nature. It muſt then be the name, and only the names, heard all our life time but never rightly comprehended, which led thoſe who know there are petrifications, yet are not very well acquainted with their conſtituent parts, to confound with real roes of fiſhes, a lime ſtone mixed with coarſe ſand; and if it be ſuſpected that I am talking of an error merely chimerical, I can quote a memoir publiſhed at Rouſberg, the author of which carefully ſets down his predeceſſors in that error *(o)*. It is thus the man of learning is deceived, and in the ſame manner are the illiterate: Etymology miſleads them both. From this ſource, very probably, is derived the vulgar opinion, that the cancer may be cauſed by handling of putrified crabs.

Mr. Adamſon, in his Natural Hiſtory of Senegal, inveighs with no ſmall heat againſt theſe errors, and the etymological infatuation. He would have all the ſeveral productions of nature called by neutral names, and without any derivation; they ſhould be mere arbitrary ſigns, of no

(*n*) *Rogen-Stein.* Stone conſiſting of fiſhes rows.

(*o*) Quæſtio naturalis Pruſſica de Oolitho Regiomontano, 1733, by Charles Henry Rappolt.

farther

farther import, and quite irrelative to other things *(l)*. This remedy ſeems to me worſe than the diſeaſe; if etymologies have their falſities, they on the other hand, intimate to us many truths, which otherwiſe we ſhould never diſcover, or at leaſt not till very late, and are truths to be rejected, becauſe they are intermixed with error? Nearly the like mixture is met with in all libraries, are they therefore to be deſtroyed. Farther, etymologies are a great help to memory, which certainly ſtands in need of help amidſt the abſtruſe inveſtigations of natural hiſtory, on the other hand, new words, without derivation, would convey ſounds too uncouth for our ears readily to take in, which would be laying memory on the rack. It is, therefore, my opinion, that we ſhould be ſufficiently guarded againſt miſtakes, would the votaries of phyſical ſciences carefully bear in mind theſe two things *(p)*: 1*ſt*, That moſt etymologies, being figurative expreſſions, are not intended to expreſs the nature of objects. 2*d*, That even when this is the intention of them, they are no more than the thoughts of an anonymous individual, and which, of courſe, require the ſame examination as all the thoughts we meet with in the courſe of our reading.

But I will ſuppoſe theſe two rules not to be a ſufficient ſecurity to the naturaliſt againſt every poſſible error, what expedient remains then for the

(*p*) His words are; "Experience teaches us that moſt of the ſignificative names, which have been given to objects of natural hiſtory, are become improper and falſe, as new properties, or properties contrary to thoſe which gave riſe to theſe names, are diſcovered, therefore to guard againſt contradictions, figurative terms are to be exploded, and ſuch only uſed as cannot be referred to any etymology whatever, that they who are infatuated with etymologies, may not be led to annex falſe ideas to words." In this the author requires an impoſſibility: what ſignifies inventing new ſounds? the people will ſoon alter them to an affinity with ſome national ſounds and common words, as among innumerable other inſtances, the Germans of *Muſlimin*, have made *Muſelman*. The execution of Mr. Adamſon's ſcheme would become a very copious ſource of errors, like that of Pilate's Mountain above mentioned. He goes on in this manner.

(*q*) "Names ſhould be like blows, or Games of Chance, between which there is generally no connection: the leſs ſignificative, the leſs relation they have to other names or known things, the better, becauſe the idea being fixed to one ſingle object, would comprehend it much more diſtinctly, than when blended with other objects in affinity to it."

meta-

metaphyſician, and the learned in other branches? Muſt they alſo invent barbarous languages, the words of which are to have no manner of connection or analogy between them? A ſad ſtroke to the ſciences! The moſt that a perſon could learn would be one, and that but very deficiently; like the Chineſe we ſhould waſte our life in retaining thouſands of characters, and what is worſe, be farther like them in this, that, after all our toil, we ſhould have learned no more than what others knew; and to carry any one ſcience to its perfection, would be utterly impoſſible. Mr. Adamſon ſeems to have had a thorough knowledge of every circumſtance relating to Senegal; but he is not acquainted with the nature of language.

In my laſt ſection I ſhall make ſome remarks, by which a true eſtimate may be formed of his project. It is with phraſes as with the etymologies of words: they were true in their origin, where their ſenſe was only figurative, but being afterwards explained in their proper ſenſe, they are become ſources of errors to whole nations, and of errors to which thouſands of years may not put a period.

They, who hold every thing to depend on providence, without any allowance to a chance, which it could not foreſee, or to a neceſſity which it could not withſtand; in a word, the ſticklers for the doctrine of the beſt world, may attribute to God all the good and evil that falls out, as the reaſon of its exiſtence lies in thoſe ſcenes of the world which preceded it, and the primordial reaſon of the whole from the firſt univerſal arrangement, of which God has foreſeen all the conſequences. This good and this evil are only a mediate, and not an immediate effect of omnipotence, which executed, a plan from whence, by a long chain of conſequences, they were to reſult: Moral good and moral evil, are here in the like caſe, though it is the former which has been the ſcope of the diſpoſition; and the ſecond has been admitted only becauſe the excluſion of it would have diſconcerted the plan, and rendered it leſs good than it is.

The Orientals, to indicate this arrangement, made uſe of bold figures; much leſs common among us, though not totally unknown.

The

The people of Berlin ſay that all marſhal Daun did in his laſt invaſion of Saxony in 1758, was the burning the ſuburbs of Dreſden. Herein they ſpeak of the mediate cauſe, without ſaying that it is only mediate, and uſe the very expreſſion which denotes the immediate cauſe. In the eaſt they go ſtill far greater lengths. There God *has done and commanded* all that men do, however, contrary to his commandments. Shimei breaks forth into imprecations againſt David; from that time God has ordered Shimei to *curſe David.* The people after all Iſaiah's diſcourſes and exhortations are little affected by them, as being what they had long been uſed to; then it is, God has ſaid to the prophet, *harden thou the hearts of this people*; and no mention is made of the innocent means which happened to be productive of this obduracy. Miracles, by being multiplied, do not convince Pharoah; they make no impreſſion on his mind; and it was God by whom theſe miracles were wrought; this the Hebrew phraſeology terms *God has hardened Pharaoh's heart.* The Iſraelites ſuffer themſelves to be deceived by lying prophets, feeding them with illuſive hopes of happier times. Here again it is; God has deceived them. If we collect together all the like paſſages in the ſame point of view, it will be palpably manifeſt that an immediate operation of God on the will and underſtanding is not, cannot be, the import of them; but that they relate only to the natural and common operations of providence *(r)*.

When evil actions are the queſtion, theſe ways of ſpeaking aſtoniſh us, and this very aſtoniſhment ſhould give us to know that theſe expreſſions are figurative. This is leſs manifeſt, when morally good actions, as converſion, faith, holineſs, and ſanctification are attributed to the deity.

By the too frequent uſes of this figure, it comes gradually to be no longer taken for a figure; and a literal ſenſe is annexed to it. God is imagined to be the immediate cauſe of all the actions attributed to him. He miraculouſly produces what moral good and evil is in man, or, at

(*r*) Exod. iv. 28. ix. 12, 16. Deut. iv. 19. xviii. 14. xxix. 25. 2 Sam. xvi. 10. xxiv. 1. Jerem. iv. 10. Eccl. xiv. 9. xx. 25.

leaſt, the latter, by with-holding a miraculous grace, without which we cannot abſtain from the commiſſion of ſin. According to this opinion, God diſcompoſes the courſe of events; he never chooſes a thing as naturally reſulting from what precedes it becauſe the order in which it comes is the beſt of all. No, on the contrary, it is by an abſolute decree that he makes choice of it; then conſiders and finds out means for bringing it to effect; and when theſe means are not in the common courſe of nature, he by his immediate influence alters that courſe.

This is what happened to Mahomet, whoſe ignorance could not enter into a philoſophic examination of his language, and diſtinguiſh letter from figure. The Arabic, which has a very near affinity with the Hebrew, and which ſpeaks of the works of providence *with the like emphaſis*, induced the prophet, who was of a ſtrong and ſaturnine fancy, and he himſelf an odd medley of the impoſtor and enthuſiaſt, to teach the abſoluteneſs of the divine decrees in the moſt rigorous ſenſe, and make man a mere machine. It will appear, that there is all the reaſon in the world to charge his error on his language, when we conſider the many miſtakes it has led him into. For inſtance, on what account could he forbid killing locuſts, had he not looked on them to be *God's army*; and his looking on them as ſuch, was becauſe ſuch is the meaning of the Arab word for locuſts (*s*). The ſame language often deſcribes ſin under the figure of a load or burden (*t*) of which a man cannot rid himſelf. This Mahomet underſtood of a material burden; and, accordingly, maintained, that the damned carried their crimes on their back, and eſpecially all the goods they had ſtolen; and this error he introduced into the Alcoran, on account of a cloak having been ſtolen out of the booty; and ſome ſons of Belial had the effrontery to ſuſpect that the thief was no other than the prophet himſelf.

A like doctrine, relating to an abſolute decree, and its immediate effects in the converſion or hardening of men has ſpread itſelf in Chriſtianity;

(*s*) جنود الله *Gunud Allahi.*
(*t*) وزر

a doctrine

a doctrine which has met with champions and antagoniſts in the three ſeveral Chriſtian religions; and it may be queſtioned, whether it does not proceed from the ſame ſource as above. Thus much is certain, that the continuance of it is owing to a falſe and perverted explanation of ſome bibliacal phraſes; taking eaſtern figures in the moſt ſtrict literal meaning: ſtill this is not the whole of what I mean. St. Auſtin is inconteſtibly the patriarch of this doctrine among the Chriſtians. With a ſlender portion of learning he had a very warm imagination; he was an African, and by language a Carthaginian. Latin indeed was ſpoken in the cities of Africa, but it was not the Roman Latin, being adulterated with a ſtrong African tinge. If Latin was the body of that language, its ſoul was formed of the Punic, St. Auguſtine's mother-tongue, and he was ſo well verſed in it, as ſometimes to make uſe of it for better illuſtrating Hebrew phraſes (*u*). Thus the good biſhop ſpoke Hebrew without knowing it. Had he been acquainted with the Hebrew alphabet, and taken ſome little pains in ſtudying the difference between that language and the Punic language of that time, inſtead of being reproached as ſcandalouſly ignorant of both the original languages of the holy ſcripture, he would have been honoured as the father of oriental philology.

Let us, but without injuring St. Auſtin's reputation, by ſtretching the compariſon too far, compare the two doctors of abſolute decrees. The imagination of both was ſtrong, and bordering on enthuſiaſm. They both had a natural bent to poetry; though, in St. Auguſtine, grace afterwards converted this bent into declared averſion. Neither of the two had ſo much learning as to guard themſelves from the eluſions of figurative ſtile; one was an Arab, and the other a Hebrew. Would it be any egregious miſtake to charge part of the origin of an error of ſo long a ſtanding, and which has ſpread itſelf among the three branches of Chriſtianiſm, on thoſe languages? I ſay in part; it being known that St. Auguſtine was farther miſled by a kind of *ſpiritual experience*; on which he relied without any ſufficient examination of it.

(*u*) Gen. xxx. 30.

SECT. VI.

Arbitrary Beauties.

OF all the antient languages which have reached our times, the Greek is perhaps the fitteſt for furniſhing us with inſtances of errors; the origin of which was ſolely owing to arbitrary beauties; but under the ſanction of time and cuſtom, they became laws; from which they who ſpoke or wrote in that language could not ſafely deviate. The voice of the people determined propriety and beauty without taking into conſideration the advantage or detriment which might reſult from the diction. Theſe beauties were pretty much like thoſe of the Gothic architecture; but he who writes for a nation muſt conform to its caprices.

Extreme fondneſs for harmony, and an extreme averſion againſt rude ſounds, may introduce errors into hiſtory. Now this nicety the Greek language particularly affected. Herodotus excuſes himſelf more than once, when under a neceſſity of inſerting proper names with a foreign ſound; and ſome he chooſes rather to omit. My Teutonic ear, indeed, is proof againſt theſe kinds of cacophonies; but very certain it is, that Grecian ears were extremely offended at them. The conſequences of this delicacy were two-fold.

Either foreign proper names were changed till they became more muſical, that is, till they became Grecian, and ſeemed derived from a Greek root: the baneful ſource of innumerable errors!

Would not children and the commonality naturally imagine that the nations, the names of whoſe towns and rivers were Greek, had originally ſpoken the Greek tongue. This falſe opinion carrying with it an air of patriotiſm, was too pleaſing not to be obſtinately defended by the multitude of the learned. It is the weakneſs of us all that we are for making every other nation a colony of ours. I am not here ſpeaking of the fables

to

to which theſe kinds of etymologies give birth, like that of *Pilate*'s *Mountain* before-mentioned.

Or theſe proper names were tranſlated; and this was the way of the Greeks with the Egyptian towns; but a way which throws hiſtory into great confuſion and uncertainty; or, at leaſt, makes the ſtudy of it extremely difficult: and hiſtorical, geographical, and other ſuch dictionaries, which, without an univerſal knowledge, are indiſpenſibly neceſſary to a ſcholar, become quite uſeleſs.

The Hebrew language has in this laſt reſpect either a great advantage, or a great fault, writing all foreign names ſo as to appear Hebrew, or, at leaſt, reducible to four radical letters. Let us only call to mind the Egyptian names which are in the bible; at the ſame time not forgetting that their origihal the Egyptian and the Hebrew languages, have abſolutely nothing in common; but theſe names being Hebrewized, nothing is eaſier than to find out Hebrew etymologies for them; and it is this eaſineſs which has indicated ſuch etymologies in all foreign proper names. Among other great men, Bochart himſelf has not eſcaped the deluſion; it is, as it were, the reigning *influenza* in all who make Hebrew their principal ſtudy. The Arabic does not allow itſelf in ſuch extravagant alterations: all foreign names in it remain within knowledge; and this contempt of falſe delicacy gives its geographers and hiſtorians a great preference. It was certainly in its victorious marches through ſo many nations varying in ſpeech, that this language contracted its maſculine roughneſs.

Such was the paſſion or infatuation of the Greeks for eloquence, that, in conformity to it, their hiſtorians were obliged to put formal ſpeeches in the mouths of all their principal characters; and in contempt of the plaineſt laws of probability, to give an oratorial turn to their whole converſation. Joſephus the hiſtorian owns that he knew no more of the hiſtory of the ancient Jews, than what he had read in the old teſtament, but ſetting up for atticiſm, and deſirous of being read in Greece, it behoved him of courſe to make the prevailing taſte his rule of compoſition; and very cloſely does he keep to it. Where the original text ſcarce exceeds a line,

line, he embroiders it with long declamations; and where the text, though more ample, contains only plain and natural expreſſions, he ſubſtitutes the flowers of rhetoric, and fictitious embelliſhments. Compare the ſpeech which he puts in the mouth of Judah, when ſpeaking to Joſeph (*x*), with that which, according to Moſes's narrative, Judah in reality made on that occaſion (*y*): the latter is full of affectionate ſentiments, and natural firmneſs; the other is languid, and bear culpable marks of art. In a word, there being no poſſibility that Judah had leiſure to form ſuch a ſtudied ſpeech before-hand, it is one of the moſt impertinent fictions with which a writer can impoſe on his reader, and try his patience or ſtupidity. This I ſay, not as blaming Joſephus, he could not do otherwiſe: his reputation as a writer depended on ſuch decorations: had he kept to truth and nature, his book would have been deſpiſed by the literati and polite.

Into what miſtakes is he led by forming his idea of an hiſtorical fact from theſe fictions? and ſtill more frequently do they disfigure, under a falſe parade, thoſe cloſe, natural, and pictureſque expreſſions, which ſo ſtrongly ſet forth the ſentiments of heroes, and are, as it were, animated effigies of them. How uncertain muſt hiſtory be, when the hiſtorian is, by the genius of his language, forced to diſguiſe truth with fictitious additions. It would be rather better for theſe oſtentatious decorations to be put in verſe; as do the Arabs ſometimes: for who, but one utterly void of reaſon, can imagine, that a hero, amidſt the thunder of war, and the diſtractions of a battle, could have compoſed and repeated a long ſtring of verſes; and that theſe were exactly retained in memory verbatim by all about him. Such madmen are ſeldom met with, and only among ſcholars.

Our modern languages have ſhaken off this kind of pedantiſm, but retaining other defects and whims not a whit better. The French language appears to me more fond of theſe falſe ornaments than any other;

(*x*) Antiq. II. 6.
(*y*) Gen. xliv.

and

and eſpecially affecting a mighty predilection for words, and what is called wit. Their very claſſical authors ſlip into this fault; which is never more ſtriking than on comparing them with the beautiful ſimplicity of Engliſh writers, who ſeem to mind only things. This remark on the French, cannot reaſonably incur their diſpleaſure: Do not they themſelves boaſt of being like the Greeks? And indeed the ſpeeches among the Greeks, and the French characters or *portraits* wear a very irrational parade of eloquence. Truth often ſuffers by theſe embelliſhments. If they ſet off dramatic pieces, in hiſtory they are faulty to the laſt degree; eſpecially as little care is taken to draw from nature, the whole ſtudy being to charge theſe portraits with ſtriking features.

Another beauty of the French ſtile conſiſts in bold thoughts, propoſitions without either proof or reſtriction, and advanced with an air of over-bearing ſuperiority, as if unqueſtionable; and which pleaſe by being ſingular and unexpected; and that affected brevity which is dignified with the appellation of an energetic preciſeneſs. That this ſtile is extremely detrimental to hiſtorical and philoſophical truths, is ſelf-evident; this, however, may be only the fault of faſhionable writers, without having yet eaten into the ſubſtance of the French language. Some of the beſt writers are intirely clear of this defect; and did I not apprehend being ſuſpected of adulation towards the academy, I could name them. But ſhould this faſhion go on half a century more, every one who writes in French will be obliged to conform to it.

SECT.

SECT. VII.

Reflections on the preceding Articles.

I Conclude with three remarks.

I. The greater part of the errors do not proceed immediately from the language; but they are retained and perpetuated by expreſſions originally pregnant with them.

2. All known languages may have certain common errors; and to ſome of which nature does not lead us. Of this we have ſeen inſtances in the fall of dew and manna; and other expreſſions not indeed erroneous, but abſolutely arbitrary, ſtill more manifeſtly evince the affinity of different languages. For inſtance, it is very arbitrarily that we Germans give the name of (*z*) *wiſdom's teeth* to thoſe which come after the twentieth year. Now the Arabs are found to uſe the ſame term (*a*); and they call a *wiſe man* one who has theſe teeth (*b*). Among the Greeks, Hippocrates makes uſe of the like expreſſion (*c*); and yet thoſe three languages are totally different. There is, as to manner of expreſſion, an affinity between all the ſeveral languages of Europe, which does not proceed from any connection or intercourſe between the ſeveral nations; but from the Latin tongue, as the idiom of the learned, and of the church. It is that which we have taken for our model; and it being the firſt which we learned by rules, the grammars of the other languages have all, more or leſs, availed themſelves of it. The learned partly think in Latin, and what they compoſe in their mother-tongue, is often no more than tranſlations of Latin thoughts. The primitive preachers from whom our forefathers received the truths of Chriſtianity, had them engraven on their minds in Latin. The Latin is not only the daughter of the Greek, but when grown up, it affected all its mother's ways, and particularly to expreſs herſelf with elegance.

(*z*) *Weiſheits-Zæhne.*

(*a*) اضراس العقل .

(*b*) منجذ .

(*c*) σωφρονισῆρες Hipp. περὶ σαρκων. c. 14. 3.

In

In the moſt antient Greek authors we meet with manifeſt traces of a connection with the Hebrew *(d)*; a connection which indeed does not relate to etymology, but it relates to the way of thinking. It may poſſibly come from the Phœnicians, to whom the genius of the Greeks owes its firſt cultivation; or from the Egyptian hieroglyphics, a ſource with which both the Greek and Hebrew poets have been equally buſy. The former make no difficulty of owning the theft, and as to the latter, a probable conjecture of it may be founded on their long continuance in Egypt; and this probability is ſo far ſtrengthened by the great number of hieroglyphical paſſages, with which their writings are interſperſed *(e)*.

Laſtly. The Saracens, over-running Europe, were the inſtruments of inſinuating into the palpable darkneſs of thoſe ages a glimmering of ſcience which, faint as it was, produced a new alloy of the European languages with the oriental.

From thence it is, that all theſe languages are ſo much alike in the turn of thought, as to give cauſe of ſuſpicion that they have certain errors in common; and to avoid theſe errors will be a matter of great difficulty, unleſs, as in the caſe of manna and dew, they are diſcovered to us by the ſenſes or experience. I am not indeed acquainted with any ſuch error: were I, it would no longer be an error to me, and I ſhould have made a diſcovery which has eſcaped all thoſe nations; but that is far beyond both my abilities and expectations; and ſuch diſcoveries, poſſibly, are neither very neceſſary, nor of any great importance. I could however wiſh that ſome philoſophical genius, who, beſides being conſummately verſed in our languages, was equally maſter of ſome remote language, as the Chineſe, or one of the American languages, would ſet down to an examination of this point.

(d) See M. Erneſti's work *de veſtigiis linguæ Hebraïcæ* in lingua Græca.

(e) See the diſſertation on the mythology of the Hebrews, which the author has added to a work of M. Lowth (now biſhop of Oxford) intitled, *Prælectiones de ſacra poeſi Hebræorum, cum notis et epimetris. Jav. Dav. Michaelis*, p. 181—204. of the Gottingen edition.

(3.) The republic of letters, as conſiſting of ſo many different nations, ſtands in need of a literary language; and the faults of this language may be very detrimental to literature.

It is not from choice, but merely from caſualty, that the Latin has attained to this dignity; and it partly owes it to religion. I look on it as a happy circumſtance that it is a dead language; the living are ſo liable to variations, that books at the end of two centuries, if not, become, in a great meaſure, unintelligible, at leaſt, are never read with the original guſt. Not that the Latin is without many inconveniencies; and one very intereſting is the want of terms in natural hiſtory, that Linnæus, and others, have found themſelves under a neceſſity of forgeing a barbarous Latin, of which Cicero would not have underſtood a ſingle word; and which even thoſe among ourſelves, who in the current Latin are not to ſeek, are obliged to ſtudy as attentively as idioms totally unknown are ſtudied.

I do not ſee that this way can remedy the inconveniencies of which I have been ſpeaking; or I rather fear, that the evil does not admit of a remedy; every nation by intermixing its language will make a barbarous Latin for itſelf, and thus unintelligible to others. This ſhould be a leading motive with the learned to apply themſelves to the purity of the antient Latin.

I could much rather have wiſhed that chance had conferred this preeminence on the Greek; eſpecially when I conſider that the Latin itſelf cannot do without it; and that it is obliged to borrow from it moſt of its medical and phyſiological terms, which thus are quite obſcure to all who are not converſant with the Greek. The verſatility of this language, and the infinite diverſity of compounds which it admits of, would have been advantages not to be met with in any other. This ſeveral perſons of the higheſt eminence in learning have perceived, but too late the die was caſt before any choice could be made, and we are carried away by its deciſion.

The Eaſt, which owes the univerſality of the Arabic language to its falſe religion, may have the advantage of us from the infinite richneſs of that

that language. It is a ſource to which we ourſelves have frequent recourſe, for expreſſing the productions of nature. Beſides, it is nearly as invariable as if it were a dead language. But theſe advantages are totally loſt in it. The Mahometan is in no need of a learned language, as little concerning himſelf about learning.

SECT. IV.

Remedies againſt the noxious Influence of a Language.

All I have to ſay in this ſection is reducible to four articles. To avoid the errors ariſing from the language; to retain what uſeful things are in it; to correct its faults; and laſtly to examine the ſcheme of a new learned lguage, properly ſo called. Having in the preceding ſections tranſitorily touched on moſt of the ſubjects relative to theſe articles, the formal diſcuſſion of them here may be abridged.

ARTICLE I.

Precautions for avoiding Errors, into which the Language leads.

Here I need only repeat the rules intimated in the foregoing ſection.

1. Credit no propoſition purely becauſe the etymology implies it, or ſeems to imply it. Etymology is the voice of the people; which the philoſopher always ſuſpects, yet always attends to it.

2. Vary your expreſſions; abſtain from the jejune method; and endeavour to blend a variegated ſtile with ſolidity of thought.

When there are ſeveral ways of expreſſing the ſame thing, it is ſcarce poſſible that the error which has inſinuated itſelf into one; ſhould have crept into all the other. Theſe kinds of errors are not ſyſtematical. We have ſeen how the common magazine of a language has come to be filled. One has introduced ſuch an opinion, another the contrary opinion. Wit, at firſt, taken only for wit, jocularity, love of novelty and ſingularity, are found to have concurred in the accumulation; and often, when error is become the univerſal opinion, a new expreſſion, at firſt looked upon only as a beautiful figure, has reſtored truth.

Languages, in a great meaſure, conſiſt of poetical expreſſions; which, by a long and frequent imitation of them in proſe, are become proſaic. Poets being obliged to ſtrike out of the common road, and ſtudy figures, their enthuſiaſm often ſuggeſts to them the moſt ſingular compariſons, ſuch as do not lie on the ſurface of the mind. Thus it is very probable, that for all the erroneous expreſſions the poetic ſtile furniſhes an antidote. Not that the poets have diſcovered truth; but, in the queſt of new ſimilitudes, they have hit on it without knowing it. Though the error of dew and manna falling from the ſky be general, yet is there a kind of manna, or, to ſpeak more properly, a wild honey, generated in trees, with only a degree of fluidity more, of which Virgil has ſaid,

Et duræ quercus ſudabunt *roſcida mella.*

Therefore, if I have above intimated that certain errors had got ſuch deep root in all known languages, that it was to be feared it would be impoſſible to diſcover and extirpate them; I ſhall here offer ſome preſervatives, which may, in a good meaſure, encourage us againſt ſuch deſpondency.

The noxious influences of a language, but little affect the man of true learning. Generally ſpeaking, they are ſuch only to the ignorant; to perſons of a ſuperficial knowledge; to the learned of a contracted genius: in a word, to thoſe who are obſtinately tenacious of the ſame expreſſions; or to thoſe whoſe whole erudition lies in languages. And the beſt

beſt of it is, that on the ſources of theſe errors being known to us, we are able to guard againſt them, as againſt all other prejudices. The academy therefore could not make uſe of a more proper way for obviating the pernicious influence of language, than by propoſing an enumeration of them for a prize problem.

I cannot, I own, conceive that any of the concurring pieces will throw a ſufficient light on this ſubject, not excepting even that which the academy ſhall crown; accounting it the leaſt imperfect. Eſſays are all that can be expected; and let me here be permitted to excuſe the imperfection of that which I have the honour of offering to the academy.

The ſubject is both new, and little canvaſſed; the few ſtrictures on it (found ſcattered in the writings of ſome great men) amount to no more than faint glimmerings.

To ſatisfy the academy, will require a philoſophical genius, and a ſagacity capable of penetrating into all the mazes of human errors; and with theſe muſt be joined a vaſt knowledge of languages. Such a writer muſt be able to compare the languages of the moſt diſtant nations, and between which and ours there is nothing of that relation which, as I have ſaid, ſubſiſts between all the European, and thoſe which go by the name of Oriental languages. The Chineſe language, for inſtance, together with all its etymological erudition, muſt be as familiar to him as his own language; beſides an equal acquaintance with the Oriental languages, properly ſo called, and thoſe of Europe; and this will not be all; he muſt farther be deeply verſed in the hiſtory of the opinions of all thoſe nations. The academy is certainly too equitable to require a compleat deduction, to which nothing under ſuch a various accumulation of knowledge, is adequate; its indulgence will be ſatisfied with a good eſſay; and ſuch an eſſay will infinitely contribute to enlarge and concentrate the empire of truth, now divided among different philoſophers, conſummately acquainted with different foreign languages; it may ſerve them as a plan for digeſting their collections, and a clew to guide them in their inveſtigations. What a happineſs would it be, were the academy itſelf, either by new prizes, or by its authority, to continue encouraging the

the labours of philoſophers, and digeſting the diſcoveries made on this head in all the parts of the univerſe, thus making itſelf the repoſitory of ſo valuable a treaſure.

Languages, generally ſpeaking, would deſerve that philoſophy ſhould devote a particular ſcience to them; but let not this ſcience, by any means, be reduced into a ſyſtem, till experience had collected and arranged every particular of it. The academy appears to have had the foundation of it in its eye; and probably the glory of enriching the republic of letters with ſuch a ſcience, will be another jewel in its crown, already ſo reſplendent. I could very much wiſh that it may one day think fit to beſtow its attention and encouragement on the following queſtion: *How can language be introduced among men, who as yet have no language, and by what means may it attain among them to the perfection in which we ſee it?*

This queſtion has a great influence on that which I am now diſcuſſing, but I have foreborne touching on it, to avoid bewildering myſelf in the vaſtneſs of its extent.

3. Such of the learned who are fundamentally verſed in the foreign languages, are, on that account, more guarded againſt the deluſions of their mother tongues, having, as it were, ſeveral mother tongues, which they can compare and correct one by the other.

ARTICLE II.

Preſervation of what is uſeful in Language.

Languages retain the riches they have acquired, when the ſciences flouriſh in thoſe nations where they are ſpoken; when they are uſed in matters of ſcience, and when good writers, ſtudious of preſerving the purity of their language, never make uſe of foreign terms but on a very great exigency, as where their own language does not afford any ſo expreſſive.

expreſſive. Wherever this is not the caſe, the national language falls to decay, and with it the ſciences. This ſhews that the ſcrupulous attention which many learned men are pleaſed to call frivolous, and almoſt account a grammatical pedantry, ſo far from deſerving that treatment, is a point of very great importance to human knowledge.

I am not acquainted with any preſervative againſt the danger which, as we have ſeen, threatens etymology. The lot of mortality is what all mortal things muſt undergo. However, if there be words, the etymology of which, with length of time, wears out of knowledge, it is to be hoped, that language will replace them with others equally uſeful for the like purpoſe.

ARTICLE III.

Improvement of the Language.

What I have ſaid in the ſecond ſection on the method for augmenting the richneſs of a language, is the beſt advice I can offer here, and its uſefulneſs may be further extended to other branches of our knowledge. The beſt remedy againſt equivocations and ambiguities, and prepoſſeſſions ariſing from acceſſory ideas, is to enrich the language with expreſſions, which admit of no equivocations, and clear of all acceſſory meaning.

There is no need of extirpating erroneous etymologies, for reality is never to be inferred from etymology. In making uſe of a word or a phraſe, ſprung from a falſe opinion, I do not therefore adopt that opinion, and if I know the real truth of the matter, I am not under an error. I may make uſe of an expreſſion, though it be a wrong deſcription, or definition, I ſay I may uſe it as a figure or an image. If a poet ſpeaking of a pilot who is loſing ſight of Italy, may ſay, *Italy ſets*, or *Italy ſinks*:

ſinks into the ſea.. The Copernician, may without any treſpaſs againſt aſtronomy, ſay *the ſun ſets*, or *the ſun ſinks into the ocean*.

I rather believe the ſcholar to be in ſome meaſure obliged to regulate himſelf herein, as every individual in the empire of language. It is not for him to give laws nor proſcribe eſtabliſhed expreſſions: if he takes ſo much on him he is ridiculed, and deſervedly; it is no more than a juſt mortification to his ambition, and the penalty of his uſurping on the rights of the people. Language is a democratical ſtate, where all the learning in the world does not warrant a citizen to ſuperſede a received cuſtom, till he has convinced the whole nation that this cuſtom is a miſtake; and if he ſubſtitutes a new term in lieu of that which has always been uſed to indicate a certain object, how can he expect to be underſtood? The German word for a *crayon* is a compound of two words, one of which ſignifies lead *(f)*; you inſiſt that it ſhould be altered to iron *(g)*, the ſubſtance of the *crayon* being feruginous: but do you think that for your ſay-ſo the current name muſt be altered, or that your corrections will be minded? The crayon is like lead in its colour and ſoftneſs, and that juſtifies the appellation. Beſides the whole nation is not informed of the miſtake, and the commonalty have other things to mind than to ſift philological miſtakes; which farther cannot be done without a knowledge of all the ſciences in their whole compaſs. On the other hand, ſcholars are not ſo infallible that every thing is to be referred to them. Were they allowed a deciſory power, the errors of language, I am ſure, inſtead of diminiſhing, would be continually increaſing. Learned heads teem with them no leſs than the vulgar; and the former are much more imperious, that we ſhould be compelled to defer to their innovations, and implicitly to receive every falſe opinion of theirs.

This conſideration, doubtleſs, has been overlooked by ſome divines; who, from a notion that no expreſſion ariſing from an error, can have found place in the ſacred ſcripture, imagine that all the words in the

(*f*) *Bley-ſtift*, } The French ſay *Mine de plomb*, i. e. black lead. It would be ridicu-
(*g*) *Eiſen-ſtift*, } lous to go about changeing it to *Mine de fer*, black iron.

bible,

bible, and taken in the moſt literal ſenſe, is always *phyſically* true. I have vindicated the bible which they injure; and this I ſhould not have taken on me, as a needleſs work, had we not recently ſeen ſome new Hermeneutics brand, as deiſtical, this poſition: that the ſcripture conforms its phraſeology to popular cuſtom.

Erroneous etymologies may, however, be in ſome meaſure rectified, by aſſociating with them more preciſe and exact expreſſions to be invented for the ſame objects. This is a right inveſted in every one who is maſter of the language he ſpeaks: he may form new words, and form new phraſes, provided they coincide with the genius of the language, and be not over multiplied. If theſe expreſſions come to obtain the ſame vogue as the erroneous expreſſions, we are in them provided with a counterpoiſon; at leaſt, language does no longer draw us into error neceſſarily: they ſometimes, in the hands of ſkilful writers, ſhall riſe on the ruins of the falſe expreſſions, which, ever after, ſhall no more be heard, or only from the mouths of the populace.

As for Gothic ornaments, I know but two ways of exterminating them: more perfect models and ſatyr. In a democracy where the law is not ſufficient to bring men to reaſon, ridicule muſt be called in to its aſſiſtance.

I have intimated ſome amendments which ſhould be made in language; but who ſhall undertake them, and in what method are they to be conducted? Not by any act of private authority; that would be a flagrant infringement on the rights of language, which are democratical; beſides the general deriſion of ſuch arrogance. It is not for thoſe ſcholars, whoſe whole merit conſiſts in erudition, to take theſe amendments in hand; ſuch an enterprize requires perſons capable of taking the lead and gaining imitation. In ſhort, it is a taſk for claſſical authors alone; and all theſe are not qualified for it: they muſt be original geniuſes, eminent in their claſs, reſpected even by thoſe learned men who value things only, and ſuch maſters of their language, as to be the acknowledged ſtandards of its purity and elegance. Theſe are the writers who may give new meanings to old expreſſions, whilſt they do not abuſe the public indulgence, by loading the language with too great a multiplicity of innovations;

and theſe their privileges are of very antient date: thus Cicero familiarized the Latin to expreſſions the import of which, before his time, could ſcarce be ſo much as thought but in Greek only *(b)*. Theſe writers often riſe to ſuch vogue, that to deviate from the ſtile which they have introduced, is enough for an expreſſion to be accounted faulty.

No perſon can aſſume to himſelf the authority of a claſſical author: and to give any room for being ſuſpected of entertaining ſuch a claim, would itſelf be an unpardonable preſumption; yet is every reformer of ſciences to cultivate his language with as much application as if he really aimed at that diſtinction. Here it is that divine poetry triumphs moſt ſignally: blending itſelf with the ſerious ſciences, it imparts to them a new degree of perfection. The time which an intercourſe with the muſes ſteals from thoſe extraordinary perſons who are both great poets and great ſcholars, is ſo far from being loſt, that an infinite advantage accrues from it to the national knowledge; and the rewards beſtowed on thoſe favourites of Apollo meet with ample returns. It is evident, at firſt ſight, that I do not here mean thoſe verſifiers whoſe talent reaches no farther than the art of making verſes; nor even thoſe ſcholars, however eminent, who force their genius, and will rhyme in ſpite of the *nymphs of Pindus*. They never riſe above mediocrity, and the language is not affected by their influence.

Laſtly, good tranſlations as requiring labour, deſerve a ſuitable rank among the means of improving a language. They bring to light the faults and deficiencies of the language, and remedy them by new expreſſions; but the tranſlator muſt, in ſome degree, be poſſeſſed of the genius and talents of a claſſic author; he muſt be at leaſt faithful, muſt thoroughly comprehend the meaning of the original, and his very tranſlation ſhould have an original appearance. It was tranſlating and imitating the Greek, that brought the Latin to be what it is. Even in Cicero's time, it was ſtill a queſtion whether philoſophy could be treated of in Latin. Nothing would more contribute to the perfecting of our lan-

(*b*) De Nat. Deorum. 1. §. 8. 8.

guages

guages than beautiful tranſlations of the immortal productions of ancient Greece and Rome. But I could wiſh them to be both leſs ſcholaſtic than thoſe which come out in Germany, and more cloſe than thoſe of France. The German is unqueſtionably a great gainer by tranſlations. It is tranſlations which have fitted it for being uſed in the ſciences, and which have enriched it with the turns of moſt of the other living languages. But bad tranſlations have done us little leſs harm. Our Mecenaſes are the bookſellers; and it were to be wiſhed, that inſtead of taking into their pay, for cheapneſs ſake, ſuperficial, if not paltry hands, they would exert their ability and intereſt, for the joint good both of the language and the ſciences. They who do, certainly deſerve both great praiſe and encouragement.

What a fair field is here for the real patrons of ſciences, to ſignalize their patronage!

ARTICLE. IV.

Whether it be poſſible to invent a learned language, properly ſo called.

Some eminent geniuſes conſidering the faults and defects in all known languages have wiſhed that the ſciences had a peculiar language, not borrowed from any nation, but the pure invention of philoſophers, in a word, *truly learned*; a language, in which each idea ſhould have its diſtinct type and character, incommunicable to any other ideas, which would, *at once*, put an end to any impropriety, figure and ambiguity. Such a language might conſiſt ſolely of written characters; or theſe characters might farther be utterable by articulate ſounds. In the firſt caſe it would be like the written language of the Chineſe, which is rather a characteriſtic, than a language, and this is an advantage which moſt of thoſe, who are for the execution of this ſcheme, would be contented with. What principally feeds their hopes, is the improvement

which mathematics have received from the language of algebra: let us, ſay they, invent an algebra for the other branches of human knowledge, and they will ſoon come to be equally improved. This project farther offers to them a moſt delightful proſpect: that by means of an univerſal language, the learned of all nations may eaſily, and conſequently will carry on a literary commerce, and reciprocally communicate their diſcoveries.

To me, I own, all theſe hopes appear to ſtand but on a ſlender foundation: I have objections and doubts to offer, both againſt the poſſibility of ſuch a language, and its ſuppoſed utility. Theſe objections I ſubmit to the academy's deciſion. And firſt, The inſtance of algebra weighs little with me. The difference between the other ſciences and mathematics, is too wide to expect ſimilar effects. In reſolving a geometrical problem, I, in ſome meaſure, compoſe the language which I am to uſe in the ſolution; and this ſmall number of characters is the more eaſily retained, as being of my own choice; for however refractory and ſtubborn the memory be againſt admitting the diſcoveries of another, it is very impreſſible and retentive, in whatever is of our own invention *(i)*.

But in every other ſcientifical operation, the reaſonings are complicated with many foreign ideas, often taken from very different ſciences; and this is the caſe even of mixed geometry itſelf. To which I add, that a perſon would not always have the making of his own characteriſtic; he would be obliged to uſe that which had been once received into the language of the learned; that is, he would be obliged to learn by heart an infinite number of characters. The reaſon is ſelf-evident: in elucidating a mathematical ſubject, I draw before me and my reader what lines are to be denoted by certain characters; or I have other means of knowing

(*i*) A friend of mine has contrived an alphabet, by means of which he can perfectly repreſent on paper all the imaginable ſounds of all languages. So accuſtomed is he to it, that he cannot be brought to think this alphabet would be very difficult for another to learn. Yet this would certainly be the caſe with me; at leaſt, in all the languages which I have ſtudied, the alphabet was what always put me to the moſt trouble, and I am apt to think that, except thoſe whoſe memory may be accounted a prodigy, it has been ſo to others.

them,

them, without any poſſibility of miſtake. On this account it is, that the characters always depend on my choice; whereas, in the ſciences, where the meaning of characters cannot be indicated on paper by ſenſible images, I muſt neceſſarily make uſe of ſigns, already known in ſome of the eſtabliſhed languages; and of which the import is univerſally agreed on, as *marriage*, *concubinage*, *polygamy*, *adultery*, *fornication*, *glory*, *ambition*, *humility*, *baſeneſs*, &c. All theſe ſigns might otherwiſe convey to the reader, ideas quite different from thoſe which I intend.

The ſame reflection exhibits to us a ſtill greater diſtance between the algebra of the mathematicians, and the characteriſtics of the other ſciences. No geometrician can be miſtaken in the algebraic character: the lines, however characteriſed, are before his eyes, that it is eaſy for him to define, and his definitions are infallible.

In other branches of ſcience, writers cannot always delineate the images of the objects to which they have annexed certain names; though neither of us be ignorant perſons, both may be miſtaken; they in their definitions and I in my application of them: ſo that a characteriſtic of this kind, will be ever obſcure and uncertain. What I ſaid above, concerning the definition of marriage *(k)*, may here ſerve for an illuſtration; and if we ſuppoſe that the inventor of the characteriſtic defines marriage, as ſome divines have, A junction of two perſons, of different ſexes, with a view to the generation, and bringing up of children, it is very clear, that this word has given him an idea very different from that which it conveys to thoſe nations where polygamy obtains. In a word, a ſcience, which is the very empire of evidence and certainty, and the demonſtrations of which ſcarce admit of any foreign objects, by no means warrants a concluſion to more complicated branches of knowledge, and theſe uſually reſting only on probabilities.

The inſtance of the Chineſe appears to me the ſtrongeſt argument againſt the ſcheme of the learned language, or the univerſal characteriſtic. I cannot exactly ſay of how many thouſands of characters the Chineſe language

(*k*) Page 15, 16.

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is at preſent compoſed; but prodigious as the number is, it would be ſtill more prodigious, as the ſciences improved. How many new characters would botany alone require? All accounts agree, that the literati of China ſpend life in learning their language, and, after all, die before they have gone through the tedious taſk. This is laying out life in making an inſtrument, and then, where is the time for making uſe of it? The length of time taken up in learning Latin ſeems to us an age; and the people held out to us for model, beſtows the whole courſe of life in its characteriſtic. Is it to be wondered at that this nation, otherwiſe ſo capable of mental improvements, has, for theſe two thouſand years, ſince literature obtained among them, made no greater progreſs; but its *ne plus ultra* ſeems to be the keeping or preſervation of what it indeed acquired very early, but which it cannot encreaſe? Three hundred years ago, when the Chineſe were already a lettered nation, we were barbarians; but how have we outſtripped them within that ſhort ſpace? One century has carried us to heights, which they have not been able to reach in twenty. Of this, natural philoſophy, aſtronomy and gunnery, are inconteſtible proofs; and as to the latter, it is obſervable, that the Chineſe were acquainted with the uſe of gunpowder long before us. Were we incumbered with ſo laborious, and ſo endleſs a characteriſtic, our modern *Promethei*, now buſied in the inveſtigation of the creator's moſt abſtruſe ſecrets, would ſtill be conning over their alphabet.

But ſo much for algebra and China: and let us proceed to more direct objections againſt the learned language.

1. This language, to anſwer all wants, would require a prodigious quantity of characters, as ſoon to tire the efforts of the greateſt genius; invention would be cruſhed and ſtupified by this load on the memory.

Our languages happily keep clear of this enormous fault by giving to one identical word ſeveral meanings, which are eaſily diſtinguiſhable by the connection of the diſcourſe, that for an equal number of ideas, we want ſcarce a tenth part of the characters with which the hypotheſis of the learned language is unavoidably clogged.

2. Were

2. Were this language to be ſat down in writing, this would ſtill be a much heavier burden on the memory. We have a kind of propenſity to aſſociate ideas to ſounds, but not at all to figures. The former is natural to man; and if, at our birth, we had not found a language ready prepared for us, we ſhould ſoon have ſet about inventing one; whereas writing is a work of art, the invention of which, probably, is by ſome thouſands of years, poſterior to the firſt language.

3. But granting that this language may be ſpoken, as well as written; its ſounds will appear to all nations equally foreign, or, to ſpeak like a Greek, equally barbarous; and foreign ſounds are much more difficult to be retained than the national, our ear being uſed to thoſe, and we are acquainted with their derivations and analogies. Let the difficulty our memory finds in an American proper name, be compared with its readineſs in retaining thoſe of our own nation *(l)*.

I ſhould farther apprehend, that the pronunciation of this learned language would not only be extremely difficult, but offenſive to the ear. The alterations and contractions to which our common languages are ſubject have cleared them of that ruggedneſs, leaving in them ſuch words only as are eaſily pronounced, and agreeable to the ear. As nature has been filing and poliſhing them for above theſe thouſand years, they may be looked on as its work; whereas the learned language would be only the production of art, an imitation of nature: and as, if I miſtake not, it ſhould be invariable, it would admit of no contractions, and be totally unimpreſſible by either file or plane.

4. It is not by uſe, but by an artificial inſtruction, that we are to learn all theſe ſounds or characters: a freſh torture to memory! We eaſily become acquainted with a language we are daily ſpeaking, and which is current in common life, eſpecially if we take in ſome grammatical aſſiſtance, yet will this ſtudy put us to very tireſome difficulties, when all our help and inſtruction is to come from art only. What a time is taken

(*l*) See my treatiſe *on Memory*.

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up in learning a little Latin, and how ſoon do we make a progreſs in the living languages!

It is certain, that the want of being ſufficiently acquainted with the Latin tongue, keeps the mind in a kind of childhood, and depriving it of ſeveral diſcoveries, ever leaves great voids in its knowledge. Yet few of the learned can be ſaid to have any thing of a perfect acquaintance with the Latin: and would not their caſe be much worſe, if, inſtead of the Latin, they were to ſtudy a language much more difficult, and with nothing of its agreeableneſs? Farther, together with this natural language, there will ſtill be a neceſſity for learning the Latin, and the other learned languages. The new characteriſtic would not let us into the diſcoveries of paſt times: the ſources of ancient hiſtory would not be found in it: and laſtly, thoſe reſpectable books from which religion is taken are written in Greek and Hebrew, and not in this characteriſtic.

5. But granting that all theſe obſtacles may be ſurmounted, and that men of letters will come into this new language ſo extremely difficult, nothing but pernicious conſequences can reſult from this uſe. The body of the people, and all who are not learned by profeſſion, will be daily ſinking deeper into ignorance: the characteriſtic throws up a partition between them and the ſciences, as the hieroglyphics among the Egyptians. No middle claſs is left between the ſcholar and the rude plebeian.

How very detrimental this would prove to the ſciences, has been ſhewn in all the paſſages of this diſſertation, relating to the benefit accruing to them from the richneſs of the natural language. But the people would be ſtill much more wretched, were knowledge ſo far confined to ſchools, as to be totally out of their reach. Civil life cannot diſpenſe with the want of it. When ſcience takes its flight, a thouſand conveniencies and gratifications vaniſh with it; and eſpecially there is no rank of life but would be deprived of an inexhauſtible ſource of delights, varying as the mind is diſpoſed, and which affords ſuch great relief in thoſe vacant hours which cannot always be filled up by ſenſual indulgencies. How tireſomely, or rather how ſcandalouſly uniform would be the life of an officer,

officer, in times of peace, without this reſource? What has a greater tendency to plunge him into idleneſs, or which is worſe, into licentiouſneſs? When I compare the multitude of military gentlemen, void of any taſte for literature, with the officers of the Orleans regiment, garriſoned here in the month of November, 1757, who behaved as if they came only to make uſe of our library, I cannot forbear moſt heartily pitying the one, and congratulating the other. Laſtly, as the worſt conſequence of a characteriſtic peculiar to the learned, the people would be left to their profound impoſtures. This is no more than what happened to the Egyptians in thoſe times when all diſcoveries were concealed under enigmatical hieroglyphics. Had all the electrical experiments made in our time, been enveloped in the veil of the characteriſtic, and known only to the learned, how eaſily might they have formed a combination for impoſing on credulous minds? and the ſecret junto, by falſe miracles, and ingenious preſtiges, have ſet up a kind of ſacred tyranny? Opportunity tempts, and the eaſineſs of impoſing increaſes the number of impoſtors. The example of ancient nations, I think, might ſerve us for a document.

But ſhould my fears be thought groundleſs, at leaſt, it is indiſputably certain, that the characteriſtic would extremely impoveriſh our mother-tongues, and thus our loſſes would over-balance any gains it might bring to us.

Is the wiſh of ſeeing the ſciences reſcued from their ſervitude to the Latin tongue, and to hear them ſpeak the living language, well grounded? Whatever can be ſaid in ſupport of this wiſh, makes equally ſtrong for me.

I have intimated, that the learned language muſt be unalterable; and, I imagine, that they who flatter themſelves to find that advantage in it, will be for aſking me what equivalent I can contraſt with it? But is not this really ſelf-deluſion? I ſhould be very apprehenſive, that this language, as to its eſſential part, I mean the ſignification of the characters, would be more variable than any of the living languages. Nothing is more changeable than the technical language of philoſophers; or indeed,

than technical terms in general. Every reformer of philoſophy, every head of a ſect, ſtrikes out a new language, and preſcribes new definitions, which is no leſs than changeing the meaning of the eſtabliſhed terms. It is natural, that he who imagines he has created ideas unperceived by any before himſelf, ſhould, in expreſſing them, make uſe of words, which before had appeared to him uſeleſs and ſuperfluous. Now I ſay, that in a language, conducted by the learned only, theſe variations muſt be both more frequent and more abrupt, than in any other living national language.

Theſe are entirely and abſolutely democratical; words cannot be deprived of their received meaning, but by the conſent of the people, and the gradual introduction of a contrary cuſtom; whereas an author treats the technical language he makes uſe of, with all the arbitrarineſs of deſpotiſm. He ſays, this is the meaning I fix to this term, this is the definition I give of it: we then are all obliged to underſtand him, as he has declared he will be underſtood, and as little can we conteſt that right with him, as preſcribe to the algebraiſt what lines he ſhall call *A*. and what *B*. This writer's language, on ſuch an increaſe of his readers and diſciples as to form a numerous party for him, will become the idiom of a ſect; and we may take it for granted that this is the caſe; at leaſt, once in twenty-five years:—in twenty-five years! Has not Germany, ſince the beginning of this century, already ſeen three heads of ſects? I mean Thomaſius, Wolff, and Cruſius; and theſe geniuſſes of a very different caſt? One happy circumſtance, however, in all this is, that theſe new idioms do not change the national language, and that thoſe men of learning, who do not affect ſingularity, and will not be led like ſcholars, perſevere in a faithful attachment to the ancient language.

What can ſecure a characteriſtic, or a language known only to the learned, from ſuch changes? Unleſs all nations will come into the ſame ſect, and adopt the like variations of the learned language, which is not to be expected. This language will ſoon ſplit into as many dialects as nations: and the misfortune is, that the meaning of learned languages, when once loſt, is much more difficult to recover than to revive the dead language of

of a whole nation. This is not the place for expatiating on the cauſes of this phenomenon; experience indeed ſufficiently proves it. In explaining antient monuments, is it not in the technical terms of philoſophers that the greateſt difficulty lies? And books full of theſe terms, are not they the firſt in growing obſcure? Definitions are but a weak remedy againſt this obſcurity; either being themſelves obſcure and defective, or the import of the terms of which they are compoſed, have been likewiſe loſt.

This new language will be no more ſecure againſt errors, than our common language: every man of profeſſed learning muſt be allowed to introduce his notions into this ſcientific idiom, or he will complain that every thing cannot be expreſſed in it. Should he entertain chimerical ideas of things not exiſting, or which being up of contradictions, cannot exiſt, he will be for realizing thoſe non-entities, by a character of the learned language. The divine, for inſtance, who believes that God is ſubſtantially preſent every where, and yet holds the ſame divine ſubſtance to be more immediately preſent to believers, will require a particular character for this impoſſible omnipreſence, his ideas of which are only negative.

Will the learned language be ſo far indulged, as to characterize the nature of objects, by means of ſome analogous combination of the ſigns; as ſome American languages, for inſtance, call the lion, *the great and miſchievous cat?* Then, as large a field will be thrown open to the man of letters for introducing his falſe notions into the language, as the people has at preſent by means of etymologies. Then, may every one, according to his particular way of thinking, coin a new word; and this puts me in mind of the tower of Babel. I ſee all that confuſion breaking in upon us, againſt which the democratic form of our languages is uſually a preventive, by admitting no term till approved of by the people. Or, on the contrary, if every object is to retain its firſt denomination, who will warrant that denomination to be right? And if any errors had crept into it, ſtill ſhould we be deprived of the reſource which our lan-

guages afford us in ſynonimes, theſe, if I rightly underſtand the ſcheme, being excluded from the learned language as ſuperfluities.

The want of ſynonimes would ſubject us to another loſs. It often happens, that when deceived by the acceſſory ideas of a word, the ſynonime undeceives us, or, at leaſt, ſhews us the object in its true point of light.

Synonimes farther ſerve to relieve both the ear, which monotony tires, and the mind, the attention of which it blunts. They therefore who imagine that the excluſion of ſynonimes would embelliſh a language, ſeem not over-well acquainted with the organ of hearing, nor the nature of the human heart.

This learned characteriſtic would be abſolutely void of all pathetic terms, and glowing expreſſions, and likewiſe of thoſe improper, but moſt energetic terms, which often, by a bare compariſon, throw both light and beauty on the whole of a ſubject.

This language therefore would be extremely jejune, uniform, and diſagreeable; as void of graces or ornaments as the ſigns of algebra; whereas the beauty of language is of more importance to the ſciences than would at firſt be imagined. Without it, attention ſoon drops into a languor, againſt which the love of ſciences alone is not able to bear it up, whereas the beauties of language keep it awake. The agreeable ideas, which, as I may ſay, play before our mind, ſerve to entertain it amidſt the profound meditations with which it is taken up. Farther, the learned language would bring a double labour and trouble on us; the words requiring very nearly as much as things: and, for the reaſons alledged in the preceding articles, could never become ſo eaſy and familiar to us, as our mother-tongues, nor even as the Latin; that we ſhould find ourſelves in the difficult caſe of one who is to ſtudy or teach philoſophy in a language with which he has but a very middling acquaintance.

The graces of language elevate genius, whereas it is cramped by jejuneneſs; and moſt diſcoveries are rather the fruits of genius, than the reſult of forced meditations, or ſyſtematical demonſtrations. A happy

aſſociation

aſſociation of ideas lays open inlarged views; and it is not till we have been ſtricken with them, that we employ ourſelves in ſearch of arguments for ſupporting and realizing them. Thus Archimedes, amidſt all his unwearied endeavours, could not ſolve his own problem; not even when the whole ſtrength of his mind was bent on it. He goes to refreſh himſelf in the bath, and at the very inſtant of his plunging into the water, the ſolution roſe into his mind of itſelf. Had he been thinking of it at that juncture, it certainly would have eſcaped him. It was to his thinking on ſomething elſe, that he owed the tranſporting diſcovery. Genius, what ſeems a ray from heaven, and which, amidſt a thouſand paths, all leading to different truths, hits preciſely on that, leading to the truth in queſtion. Genius, I ſay, is rendered more lively and active by pleaſure and beauty; whereas it is benumbed by abſtractions and profundity. From no other ſource can be deduced thoſe new thoughts, which the philoſophic poet brings forth, as it were fortuitouſly, in the fits of his enthuſiaſm, and which, however, ſtand the moſt rigid text, and may be accounted oracles.

I can here ſcarce forbear, vindicating the amenities of ſtile, from the unjuſt contempt of that ſaturnine philoſophy, which calls them traſh, fit only for the futile tribes of poets and wits; and evincing how much that univerſal inſtinct, which forms the language of nations, adapts itſelf to the wants of human nature, and, in a word, ſhews how much the variations of ſounds, harmony, imagery, and figures, interweaving in the diſcourſe, pleaſurable ideas, favour meditation, and elevate the genius. But I am within ſight of my concluſion; and this would be launching out into freſh matter, which would carry me little ſhort of that which was the formal ſubject of the diſcourſe.

A ſcience laid down to us in the language of common life, will be always better learned than when delivered in a technical language, and the beſt teachers of philoſophy, are they who bring all notions to the level of common ſenſe. But it is manifeſt that this is an advantage quite incompatible with the learned language.

Laſtly,

Laſtly, I am perſuaded that a characteriſtic of a new invention would, in point of utility, be inferior to the common languages of nations, in a thouſand reſpects, which I cannot previouſly determine. The diſcovery muſt however be undertaken only by one ſingle ſcholar, and, conſequently, his deciſion muſt be abſolute: but whoever this inventive ſcholar be, I ſhall not lay ſuch a ſtreſs on him as on the democracy of a whole nation. The metaphyſics of language is not yet ſufficiently cultivated; and were that as far as poſſible, very few would underſtand it, ſo as to be able to make uſe of it. Beſides an accurate knowledge of man, it ſuppoſes a very extenſive acquaintance both with philoſophy and philology; and theſe are qualities not eaſily found in one perſon; as the academy itſelf has obſerved in the *ſummary of the diſcourſe*, on which it was pleaſed to confer the prize.

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